

PHOTON

Special 10th Anniversary issue





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COVER- Six fan artists present six views of the past decade in fantasy films. Can you spot the number "ten" in the illustrations by Dave Carson, Chris Farrill, Dave Ludwig, Bill Nelson, Narsah Rader and Maurice Squidd? Cover design by Dave Ludwig.

BACK COVER- a tribute to the late Lon Chaney, Jr. Scratchboard by Dave Ludwig.

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IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD- that the responsibility for the originality of all material sent to us is solely that of the contributor.

STILL THIS ISSUE- A remembrance of Lon Chaney, Jr. For his legion of fans.

DEDICATION

This issue is dedicated to YOU! To all of the friends & readers who have enabled us to continue publication for the past ten years. Thank you, all, for your support and encouragement!

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Richard Corben: p. 4, 46; Steve Karchin: p. 10, 25, 40.

Dave Ludwig: p. 2, 47; Bill Nelson: p. 3.



FRANKLY SPEAKING...

Ten years is a reasonably long period of time to be involved with any pursuit, but when it comes to publishing a fanzine, ten years is forever. Back in 1964, the field of filmgines was filled with but a few isolated examples of creativity and imagination. *Gore Creatures*, *Garden Ghouls Gazette* and *Orpheus* immediately come to mind. Now, a decade later, the genre of filmmaking which we have adopted has come into at least a modicum of acceptance, and new magazines, both fan and professional, are appearing all the time. In some ways, younger fans becoming involved with fantasy film fandom today are extremely fortunate, for they have at their fingertips a wealth of information and entertainment in the pages of magazines like *The Monster Times*, *Cinefantastique*, *Special Visual Effects* by Ray Harryhausen, *Little Shoppe of Horrors*, etc., etc. Yet, on the other hand, they probably don't experience the same excitement some of us felt whenever we learned that there was a new publication dedicated to our hobby—even if that publication was mimeographed or hectographed.

This issue is dedicated to our readers and our contributors, to whom we offer a hearty and sincere "Thank You!" Thanks to all of the people who have burned the midnight oil toiling over the sort of articles or features which they generously shared with us. Thanks to the artists who, as often as not, had to put up with some crazy assignment or impossible deadline. Thanks to those who have given so freely of their time, their photographs, their research, their suggestions and their criticisms. Thanks to Ronald V. Borst, who seems to spend as much time on his work for the magazine as he does teaching third grade in Pennsylvania. To Jim Woroski, who never allows his work as an editor for Doubleday to interfere with his dedication to PHOTON. To Dave Ludwig and Bill Nelson, whose twenty magic fingers have done so much to improve the visual aspect of the magazine. There are so many more people to thank. At the top of the list is the man who started it all, Forrest Ackerman. Perhaps the kindest and most giving individual on the face of the earth, Forry has provided continual support and inspiration throughout our ten year history. In the 100th issue of *Famous Monsters*, he set aside some space to list those people who had supported the first of the progenies. Let me borrow yet another of his ideas and do likewise for those who have been instrumental to PHOTON. David Allen, Robert W. Allen, Allan Asherman, John and Michael Brumas, Paul & Larry Brooks, Jeff Burns, Greg Bear, Luigi Cozzi, Richard Corben, John H. Carpenter, Frederick S. Clarke, Sam Comstock, Gary Dorst, Jim Danforth, Frank Della Stritto, Tom Dugres, John Devoti, Don Dreyer, Joe Dante, William K. Everson, Lynn Friberg, Eric Hoffmann, Edie Hulse, Randall Harris, Ted Isaac, Charles P. Johnson, Paul Jensen, Chris Knight, Gene Klein, Ken Lodge, Harry Long, Jean-Claude Michel, Mark Thomas McEee,

Scott MacQueen, Ace Mask, David MacDowell, Lynn Naron, Henry Nicotella, Peter Nicholson, Bill Pughrie, Jean-Claude Romet, Marsha Rader, Tom Reamy, Larry Richardson, R.J. Robertson, Bob Scherl, Al Satien, Gary Svehla, David Szurek, Eugene Steinberg, Greg Shoemaker, John Soister, Bob Sheridan, Eli Savada, Sue Turner, Steve & Erwin Vertlieb, Don Willis, Bill Warren, Allen White, Steve Kaplan, Wes Shank and Steve Karchia. And the dozens of others whom I've, no doubt, left out of this small list! Thank you, all!

Like most issues, this 10th Anniversary magazine went through numerous changes from conception to completion. Originally, we planned to offer a great number of reprinted articles from PHOTON's past. Only two reprints, however, are contained herein. David MacDowell's in-depth analysis of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, first printed in PHOTON #16, is one of our most highly acclaimed features and, thanks to several re-releases, is as timely as when it was first penned. Our second reprint, from PHOTON #19, is Dave Holman's cartoon version of Pal's WAR OF THE WORLDS.

Elsewhere in this issue, Paul Mandell investigates an oft-neglected movie excursion into lycanthropy, THE UNDYING MONSTER. Barely screened on television, revisited at conventions, the picture is atmospheric & entertaining, certainly deserving of more coverage than it has received. With only three major pictures to his credit, Dario Argento has caused a bit of a fervor among horror film fans. Richard Menello tries to explain why. Then, Argento's collaborator Luigi Cozzi provides some insight into Argento the man. Eric Winograd's annotated listing of science fiction directors offers a convenient, if controversial, method of categorization and will hopefully spark some comment among those readers who agree & disagree with his classifications.

There are few among us who, at one time or another, hasn't been called upon to justify his interest in the cinema of the fantastic. If, on these occasions, you've been asked and have for an explanation you'll no doubt be able to identify with Mark McEee's comments in "Why Are Horror Movies So Awful." There are, unfortunately, some very good reasons why the mainstream views horror and science fiction films with a derogatory attitude. Something else often regarded derogatorily is the stuffy and pretentious manner with which filmfines. PHOTON included, present their film reviews. Our "Capsule Reviews" are intended as satire, yet we'll be surprised if there aren't at least one or two readers who may take them seriously!

With PHOTON #18, the cost of an issue rose from 60¢ to one dollar. It is our sad duty to report that, once again, we will be forced to increase the price of the magazine. Skyrocketing printing and paper costs and the upping of the postal rates make this move an unfortunate but necessary one. Beginning with this issue, the single copy rate will be \$1.50 (\$1.75 outside the U.S.). The subscription rate must be raised to six issues for \$8.00 (\$9.50 outside the U.S.).

--Mark Frank--



capsule reviews

If fantasy film magazines have had a common element over the past ten years, it would have to be the printing of capsule reviews. Incredibly short write-ups, of the sort one would expect to find in a TV listing, have been appearing in professional and fan publications since their humble beginnings. In keeping with the spirit of our tenth anniversary, we have enlisted the aid of Gordon Hanson and Phillip-Edwin Strong, the Third, authors of the forthcoming book, *The Definitive Study of the Horror Film*. What follows below are excerpts from their chapter of capsule reviews, from Volume One.

RATING SYSTEM:

****=EXCELLENT ***=GOOD **=FAIR /BOMB/

ABSOFT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN /BOMB/ Does anyone who is even moderately interested in horror movies need to be warned off this tepid little program? That seems as superfluous as warning a gourmet against canned spaghetti. Karloff passed this one by. And so should you.

ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS /BOMB/ Monster mollusks menace Russ Johnson and company on a deserted isle. Somewhat reminiscent of an old "Gilligan's Island" episode, but perhaps funnier. The screenwriters of this film would have us believe that 25-foot crabs would be articulate enough to slice radio tubes neatly in half. And that's early in the film!

ATTACK OF THE 50-FOOT WOMAN //** Radiation accelerates the growth of a woman who uses her giant size to out-wit her two-timing husband. Allegorical implications that her size represents her hate makes this one a cut above the usual fare. Special effects are not quite up to par, but top notch Nathan Hertz (Juran) direction overcomes this minor flaw. And oh that Allison Hayes!!

BLACK SLEEP, THE //** Somewhat disappointing tale of a mad brain surgeon's attempts to revive his dead wife, aided by a strong cast of horror favorites. Bela Lugosi adds to his already impressive list of credits by proving himself a master of mise.

BLOD, THE /*/** Plasma-like substance from outer space threatens a small community. Rough around the edges, the film makes good use of on-location photography and was filmed at a time when Steve McQueen still cared enough to turn in an enthusiastic performance.

BLOOD OF DRACULA //** A tightly knit, unpretentious suspense in the spirit of the early Val Lewton films. Student in a girl's school is corrupted by one of her teachers. Try to ignore some of the more juvenile aspects of the script and concentrate on Herbert L. Strock's deft direction. Not for the small fry.

BITES OF DRACULA //** Still another tasteless Hammer entry. This time it's an effeminate blond vampire who causes havoc first by molesting his mother, then by making love to Dr. Van Helsing, ending it all by prancing about a girl's dormitory chasing the young woman. For lovers of old EC comics only.

CREEPING ONDOWN, THE /*/** Fast paced meller concerning an astronaut who returns to earth infected with some cosmic growth. Veteran actor Brian Donlevy is excellent as Dr. Quatermass, a character to be used later in a series of inferior sequels.

CURSE OF THE DEMON //** Hal Chester probably thought veteran horror director Jacques Tourneur would be able to make an exciting movie out of this silly piece of fluff about a devil cult in London. But

advancing age apparently forces Tourneur to substitute talk for action (unless, of course, Lewton was totally responsible for the success of those early RKO flicks), and even the hoaky monster footage tacked onto the beginning and end of the film couldn't raise it above its second feature status. Even Dana Andrews looks bored. Or drunk.

THE CIRCLOPS //** So-so special effects and uneven story benefit from a sympathetic title character in this early Bert Gordon effort. And it's always good to see James Craig again.

DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, THE //** Space visitor explains that earth people are too incompetent to solve their own difficulties. Of course, no real solution to a very real problem is provided in this superslick production which seems to be a plan for a fascist police state controlled by machines. This point seems to be overlooked by enthusiastic fans of this film. It's okay, but let's not get carried away.

DEADLY MANTIS, THE /*/** Foliar disturbances are traced to a prehistoric insect. Lively tale does not rely on visual razzle-dazzle for its entertainment. Razor sharp performances and documentary flavor make this story even more terrifying.

DEVIL'S BRIDE, THE //** The Devil may care about this silly, confusing story, but no one else should. Possibly the worst ending in motion picture history. It seems only natural that Chris Lee should walk off the set of this picture and onto *FOUR DEVILS*.

DRACULA /*/** Forty years haven't taken the chill out of this Tod Browning classic. Bela Lugosi remains the only actor to be identified with the vampire count. Keep the lights on for this one.

EQUINOX //** Engrossing art-house horror film which finds four teenagers challenging the supernatural forces. Shocking climax where evil triumphs over good makes a strong comment about our times.

FLAME BARRIER, THE /*/** An effective blend of jungle adventure and sci-fi action as a search party discovers the horrible fate of a missing astronaut. Fever pitched climax has made this once ignored film a television classic.

THE FLY //** Bungling scientist mixes his atoms with those of a fly. Talky, silly horror film might have made a fair half-hour TV show. As it stands, however, useless padding cheats audience of anticipated action which was later delivered in a much less pretentious sequel.

Pictured below, authors Gordon Hanson (left) and Phillip-Edwin Strong III on their estate in Boston, Massachusetts.



FORBIDDEN PLANET *** Spacemen are menaced by a mad scientist, his robot, and a Disney cartoon. Interesting id-monster concept is lost in this overblown Hollywood space opera version of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Patronizing and juvenile, script writer's idea of a comic high point comes when the robot belches.

FRANKENSTEIN 1970 **** Solid entry in the Frankenstein series. Producer's serious intentions to update the story are revealed early in the film when the traditional cliché opening is dispelled, making way for a far more inventive middle and end. Shock ending packs a punch!

FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON **** A distinguished cast in a fine adaptation of Jules Verne's classic. Story does not resort to artificial inducement of monsters for a change. Directed with his usual skill by Byron (WAR OF THE WORLDS) Haskin.

GIANT CLAW *** Kids will be delighted by this fast-paced story about a flying menace from outer space. Parents will not only get a kick out of the hokey monster but, at the same time, will rest easy knowing it won't scare the small fry.

GIANT FROM THE UNKNOWN **** A Spanish warrior is returned to life and begins a quest of blood lust. Note that producers did not use unconvincing matte and split screen shots but, instead, created their giant by clever use of perspective backgrounds, imagery, and camera focus techniques.

HARD OF DEATH *** Experimental nerve gas slowly poisons a well-manning scientist, transforming him into a monster. A short and sweet little sleeper in which John Agar waives the use of a stunt man and proves (once and for all) that he is more than just "Mr. Shirley Temple" in this one man tour de force.

HORROR OF DRACULA ** Undignified, lackluster version of the Bram Stoker novel in unmeasured by anything resembling good taste. There's a murder of one sort or another every fifteen minutes, proving that Hammer's main commodity is certainly not horror but sadism and violence. As usual, the low budget confines most of the story to interiors, creating sort of an analogy: the film never sees the light of day. Terence Fisher's pedestrian direction is the final salt on the wound. Suffers from tired blood.

HOUSE OF Usher **** Already a legend in its own time, this was the first, the best, in the series of AIP Poe films. Floyd Crosby's camera captures all the brooding mood of Usher Mansion, while Corran directs with an unusual flourish. Vincent Price proves himself to be one of our more polished actors. This inventive motion picture has often been imitated, but never duplicated. And be on the look-out for the stew-pot scene, courtesy of Richard Matheson.

HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL **** Bill (ROSEMARY'S BABY) Castle pulls another rabbit out of his hat with this tongue-in-cheek tale of witches, ghosts and goblins with Vincent Price inviting everybody to spend the night in his haunted house. The cast seems to have a great time -- so will you.

INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN *** Blame radiation again, this time for shrinking six footer Grant Williams to the size of a pin-head. In spite of sincere performances and pseudo-philosophic ending, this impertinence proves to be little more than an exercise for the studio's special effects department. Might also be good for a few unintentional laughs.

INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN *** Ambitious little film about an executed killer who is accidentally returned to life. Often more effective than some of its big-budgeted brothers.

INDECENTS, THE ** Insane governess imagines that she sees ghosts. A well-meaning dramatization of Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* tries unsuccessfully to mix psychological overtones into an old fashioned spook story. What is left is a pretentious, talky and vague conglomeration of sexual frustrations written by a man best suited to the subject...author Truman Capote.

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS *** Pod monsters in-

vade small California town. Space invasion theme handled much better in *Pai's WAR OF THE WORLDS*. In spite of film's deserved failure at the box office, this picture has managed to achieve some sort of status among sci-fi cultists. See it and judge for yourself. Pre-posterous!

KING DINOSAUR *** Imaginative, lively tale of interplanetary exploration to a new planet, Nova, resembling prehistoric earth. Low budget often detracts from the production, but what the film lack financially it makes up for in spirit.

KING KONG **** Giant ape breaks loose in New York. It's old fashioned, dated, and special effects have come a long way since its original release. Film still manages to raise a few hairs. The kids should especially like it.

LAST MAN ON EARTH **** Richard Matheson's chilling novel is not altogether successfully transferred to the screen, but it is still a thriller. Vincent Price gives a bravura performance as the only human left in a world of vampires. Atmospheric yarn should not be watched alone.

LOST WORLD, THE **** All star cast adds new luster to familiar Conan Doyle story about a lost plateau of prehistoric monsters. Producer Irwin Allen wisely persuaded Willis O'Brien to abandon his primitive animation techniques in favor of more realistic live-action animals. And when you get tired of looking at the monsters, there's always curvaceous Jill St. John!

MAGIC SWORN, THE *** Director Bert I. Gordon has matured a great deal since *SEMPER PARADOX*. With tongue firmly in cheek, Gordon cleverly mixes comedy, suspense, romance and horror in a tale of knights and fair maidens. Fun for kids 8 to 10.

MAN WHO TURNED TO STONE **** Often maligned producer Sam Katzman breaks free of his "2-King" image by making this clever tale of terror. Girl's school becomes a prison as students learn they are being used for a mad scientist's experiment. Not a classic by any means but still an exciting treat.

MONSTER ON THE CAMPUS **** Campus creature chases co-ed cuties. Unintentionally funny at times, may be the worst film ever made. Veteran horror director Jack Arnold should have quit while he was ahead. Even Arthur Rankin confirmed that Joe Gershenson should have stuck to musical direction.

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD ** It's Saturday night at the butcher shop in this steal of Richard Matheson's "I Am Legend." Panders to the lowest common denominator with graphic close-ups of flesh-eating ghouls. Tasteless movie trash.

PLANET OF THE APES *** Chuck Nelson grins his teeth through this turgid collection of monkey-shames, high on action and low on intellect. Surprise ending stolen from those old suspense and supernatural comic books of the '50's. Except those comic stories were shorter than this movie. Clever monkey make-up, if that's your idea of a good time.

QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE **** Successful transfer of comic art style to film, featuring such camp stars as Zsa Zsa Gabor and Eric Fleming. Stylized direction and colorful sets make this predecessor to *BATMAN* and *AMAZON* a welcome sight of its time. But what would you expect from two top-notch writers like Ben Hecht and Charles Beaumont? Too bad the critics missed the point.

ROCKETSHIP X-W **** Poorly made cheapie hurried into release to cash in on the publicity of *DESTINY: ACTION MOON*. Kurt Neumann should have studied George *Pai's* pictures before attempting this farce, particularly *WAR OF THE WORLDS*. Bet Wyatt Earp and Mike Nelson would like to forget this one.

ROSEMARY'S BABY ** The Devil is raising hell again, this time with Mia Farrow as his unwilling bride-to-be in this formula shocker. With his films (*REPULSION*, *VAMPIRE KILLERS*, *NACHTHEIM*) adding fuel to a festering

IN RETROSPECT The UNDYING MONSTER

BY PAUL MANDELL

"Hammond Hall, at the turn of the century, when the age-old mystery of the Hammond monster was at last revealed to all England. That mystery, which altho by 1906 had become a legend, was indeed a tragedy and constant threat to the lives of all the seemingly doomed members of the House of Hammond..."

So began the prologue (by the voice of actor Bramwell Fletcher) to *THE UNDYING MONSTER*, a tight little horror-mystery film of 1942 that has suffered a considerable lack of recognition over the years. This neglect can be initially attributed to the way in which major horror themes were exploited and neatly commercialized by studios of that decade. The film has been referred to (when referred to at all) by Denis Clifford in his book *Movie Monsters* as a "brilliant little film" and Carlos Clarens has cited it as "a superior werewolf story." Perhaps a little understanding of the era in which it was produced can serve to demonstrate the factors that contributed to the film's brilliance. The all-too-real horrors of the Second World War did not threaten the production of horror films in the early forties, as people welcomed a catharsis to the troubled times by the fantastic thrillers on the screen. However, in the hands of mediocre craftsmen, they were to merely serve as the cheapest kind of movie diversion, degrading the masterful creations of the preceding ten years. Silly and careless productions such as those that came out of Monogram provided a temptation to this and well-known horror personalities became prey to this indifference, debasing the genre considerably. Studios such as Universal and Columbia continued to grind out their quota of chillers, which were expected to net a small profit with no reconciliation for their lack of quality. The producers concluded that the market for such films would never die off,

and there would always be an audience oblivious to even the harshest criticism of reviewers. As a result of this opportunism, the horror film stagnated. Now and then, another major studio would venture into the genre. In 1942, 20th Century Fox was approached by Bryan Foy, an American producer of low-budget co-features and who'dunits since 1924, who presented the material for *UNDYING MONSTER* to the studio. Foy hired John Brahm to direct, who had been working in England on several cleverly-done mystery thrillers, and the result was an unusually ingenious collaboration which unfortunately was unable to sustain the weight of its overly-hyped competition.

For the benefit of those who may not be familiar with the film, a recap of the story would be appropos. Our tale is set in Olde Cornwall on the southwestern tip of England, where the bleak moorlands are broken by rugged, craggy tors that dot the coast. The plot is centered around the death of the servant girl, Kate O'Malley, who was found in a cove near the cliffs. Miss Helga Hammond finds her brother, Oliver, unconscious near Kate's body, and his spaniel is found horribly mangled nearby. When Oliver awakens in Hammond Hall, he gives a chilling account of the incident to his sister and Dr. Geoff Cobert, the family physician. Oliver relates how he awoke in the light after fighting something horrible and unseen, and it is here that references are made to the curse that has been hanging over the heads of the Hammonds' for years.

Scotland Yard is called in to investigate under the order of Inspector Craig, an old friend of the Hammonds', and London's top scientific criminologist, Mr. Robert Curtis, is summoned to work on the case. In a dialogue between Helga and Craig, we learn that her grandfather (a brave and gallant soldier) had killed himself on the rocky lane several years back after he had seen "it". The Hammond legend is revealed, something to the effect that centuries ago, one of their ancestors sold his soul to the devil, and still lives in a secluded room in Hammond Hall, issuing forth at intervals to sacrifice human life in order to prolong his own. The entire household is unnerved; Walton, their faithful butler, lurks about uneasily and the maid screams at the slamming of the front door by the wind. The investigation takes us to Hammond crypt

BELOW: Halliwell Hobbes wears Heather Angel not so venture out onto the rocky lane on a frosty night. **RIGHT:** The investigation of the eerie Hammond crypt uncovers a statue of some weird hybrid beast guarding the tomb of Sir Reginald Hammond. (Left to right: Heather Thatcher, John Howard, Heather Angel, Bramwell Fletcher and James Ellison.)





in the collar. There, the tomb of Sir Reginald Hammond is found, a crusader who fought in King Richard's time. A grotesque statue of some hybrid canine is found near the tomb, suggesting something supernatural. An inscription is found, one that is reiterated comically by Walton throughout the film:

*"When stars are bright on a frosty night,
Beware thy bone, on the rocky lane..."*

Kate O'Malley finally succumbs to her canine condition, and the strange Mrs. Walton suggests that it looked as though Kate had been dropped in addition to her bloody ordeal, arousing the suspicions of the wary Curtis.

A particularly chilling scene follows in which Mr. Curtis and Inspector Craig examine a tuft of coarse hair that Curtis had previously found at the scene of the crime. The room lights are dimmed, and the hair is placed in a spectroscopic and compared with a spectrum slide of wolf's hair. Both appear identical, but the tuft of hair suddenly disappears before their eyes as soon as the light strikes it, and Craig frighteningly exclaims: "Perhaps there are still some things in this world that science hasn't found out about."

Finally, Curtis obtains a sample of Kate O'Malley's blood and finds it to contain cobra venom extract. Breaking into Dr. Covert's lab he finds a vial containing the same venom. Curtis accuses the doctor of injecting it into her veins in order to prevent her from ever regaining consciousness, but it is revealed that the venom got into her system through the scratches of whatever had killed her. An unearthly howl is heard, and the monster enters the Hammond house, stealing into Belga's bedroom and abducting her. It carries her off into the rocky lane, with Curtis in hot pursuit. It finally pats her down on the rocks, and climbs to the top of the cliff where the monster meets a policeman's bullet. His horrible visage dissipates, revealing the face of - Oliver Hammond, the unfortunate victim of lycanthropy whom Dr. Covert had been treating with cobra venom extract in the hope that it would "straighten out the dreadful kink

in his brain which he had inherited from his ancestors!"

UNDYING MONSTER was an atmospheric production, whose particularly British-flavored cast featured a number of Heathers, Halliells and Holmes'. Filmed at the Fox Studio in Hollywood, there were only two American actors in the film:

John Howard, a leading man in various "B" pictures of the '30's and '40's (including the Bulldog Drummond series, 1937 - 39), competently played Oliver Hammond who had no knowledge of his unfortunate affliction.

James Ellison, familiar to many a western fan of the forties, was cast in the role of Inspector Curtis. Ellison's performance was almost a caricature of the wooden detective, with his rapid, probing, ratiocinative dialogue conjuring up a cross between Sherlock Holmes and William Powell.

Samuel Fletcher played Dr. Covert in a suave, nasal performance, often suspected as the villain. Fletcher can be remembered as Trilby's suitor in *SVENGLI* (1931), and as the unfortunate Ralph Norton who died laughing in a straight-jacket after tampering with the sacred scroll in *THE MONK* (1937). He was last seen in the 1945 production of *NIGHT MONSTER*.

The part of Walton was played by the late Halliwell Hobbes, long the impeccable butler of many a movie mansion, who gave one of the most convincing performances in the film. He might best be remembered in the *DR. JEVIL* AND *MR. HYDE* of 1932, and in the part of Hawkins, the very old police sergeant counterpointing the bumbling Billy Bevan in *DIAGNOL'S DADDER* (interesting to note that Edgar Norton played a butler named "Hobbs" in the same film). Hobbes was particularly eerie in his lumbering about the Hammond estate, always reminding the cast that "the Hammond error ventures into the rocky lane on a frosty night."

Further interesting performances were exhibited by Heather Angel in her stanch, but feminine role as Belga (who was more recently seen in *AIF's FERMATHE BELL*), and by the late Aubrey Mather as Inspector Craig, a bearded British character actor who long specialized in playing butlers and beaming bald-headed little men. He was always reminding Curtis that "there are some things that can't be explained in the ordinary way."

Of course, the one element that is mostly responsible for raising the sophistication and intelligence of a film from the mediocre (particularly the film of a fantastic nature) is the director, the really cohesive force in a motion picture. John Brain (formerly Hans Becha) was a German director who had created a series of mood-drenched melodramas in the forties, and who in 1936 went to work in the United Kingdom via Hollywood. He.

The beast steals into Belga's room and abducts her. In the film the monster's face and form were always kept in an abundance of shadow. The actor here is apparently a double for John Howard.



BELOW: The beast carries Helga across the rocky lava as Dr. Cobert (Pitchee) crouches behind a rock. Wise publicity still reveals the atmospheric set of stark black and whites. RIGHT: English bobbers shoot the beast as it slips the lava to its doom.



Brahm later delegated his talents to television where he directed hundreds of TV dramas, many of his finer works appearing on Alfred Hitchcock Presents. (A superb example of Brahmanian horror appeared in The Cheaters episode of the Thriller series, from an original story by Robert Bloch). Some of the films of the genre that highlighted his career were THE LODGER, the Jack-the-Ripper tale of 1944 which has been remade several times, and THE MAD MAGICIAN in 1954. (The latter was patterned after his old friend Bryan Foy's 1933 HOUSE OF WAX). Brahm's flair for suspenseful direction was never fully realized by the motion picture public and, according to film historian Leslie Halliwell, his great virtues of visual taste and dramatic balance were unable to sustain his career.

Characteristic of the superior job Brahm did with THE UNDYING MONSTER was the ominous mood he created with Lucien Ballard's camera, using an abundance of shadow, slow panning and ambiguous lighting, and keeping his monster faceless until the conclusion.

For the establishing shot at the start of the story, the camera pans mysteriously around the Hammond mansion revealing odd statues of crusaders lit by firelight in a truly gothic atmosphere. From the outset, Brahm asserts his sense of visual style. When the main characters congregate in the Hammond crypt, Oliver's great dane jumps out of the shadows in a jolting, but harmless display of affection for his master. Later on, the camera slinks through the shadows of Helga's bedroom as a hand is chillingly revealed from behind a curtain, eerily illuminated by the moonlight spilling in from the window. Such forbidding visuals were sadly lacking in most horror efforts of the forties, and even the better Universals relied on much less imaginative means of visual expression.

Having had earlier filmmaking experience in Europe, Brahm seemed to have absorbed a lot from the German expressionistic cinema, and projected many of its moody elements into his work. Stylistically, one might feel confident in placing Brahm's UNDYING MONSTER along side the Val Lewton films of the forties. Brahm was careful in keeping his werewolf concealed in shadow, and the brief glimpses we get of the beast are executed with subtle backlighting. In one terrifying shot, the monster jumps down from the balcony carrying the white-clad heroine, its coarse features vignated by moonlight in the courtyard. In a further attempt to convey the supernatural, Brahm speeded up the camera as the monster scaled the rocky lane, an effect which gave itself away somewhat comically when the camera was stopped and combined with normal movement in the same scene. An interesting

set was devised by art directors Richard Day and Louis Greber (whose son William Greber created the poly-urethane city for the PLANET OF THE APES series some 23 years later), complete with grotesque, lifeless trees and rocks contrasted with the stark whiteness of a sky cyclorama, a set strangely reminiscent of the "exteriors" in FRANKENSTEIN and even more so of Mankiewicz' beautiful tree-and-sand-studio stage recreation for INVADERS FROM MARS.

Oddly enough, credit for makeup was omitted, but the monster remained as a peculiarly horrifying one to behold. Brahm's werewolf resembled a cross between the unfortunate Andreas Osey (Matt Willis) in RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE and that of Steve Rich's portrayal of Duncan Marsh as the unwilling victim of unscrupulous science in Columbia's THE WEREWOLF of 1956. What made this lycanthrope unique was the way in which the final and only shot of the monster's face was executed. Unlike the previous collaboration of Jack Pierce and effects ace John P. Fulton for the WOLFMAN in which Chaney's metamorphosis was made with a series of articulate dissolves (a more elaborate version of this appeared four years later in HOUSE OF DRACULA), John Howard's transition was curiously accomplished with the traveling matte process in which the matte conforming to Howard's face was slowly faded out, revealing more normal features in the final stages of the superimposition. The eerie effect was somewhat apparent in the peculiar fringing of the werewolf's head as a bullet was fired into his skull by an avowed policeman, and the grotesque manner in which Howard grimaced and snarled his way to his doom (bringing an end to the Hammond curse and to the film) remains as one of the most overlooked scenes in horror cinema. Credit for the effect can probably be given to the late Fred Sersen, the "house special effects man" at Fox, who may best be remembered for his genius with mattes in creating the fire sequence in IN OLD CHICAGO.

In true whodunit style, Brahm successfully diverted the audience's suspicion from character to character. Walton lumbers about Hammond Hall, always appearing apprehensive, and mysteriously burns a piece of Oliver's scarf that would tend to incriminate his master. Dr. Corbet erases an incriminating set of footprints in the crypt as if by accident, and consistently resents Curtis' cross-examinations. No one would ever suspect Oliver, as it was he who was supposedly attacked by the beast. Suspicion of the characters is heightened through bits of threatening dialogue:

Walton: "There are some things that are beyond the understanding of those who walk this earth."

To Mrs. Walton: "Keep quiet! Do you want to add another crime to all the others?"

Dr. Cobert: "Why don't we send this fellow Curtis packing?"

The film gave an interesting account of lycanthropy. The foreboding omen "When Stars are Bright" succeeded the ever-popular "Even a Man who is Pure at Heart" from THE WOLFMAN produced one year earlier.

(continued on page 38)

DARK UNIVERSE: THE W

KARCHIN



It was without much fanfare that Dario Argento burst upon the international film scene in 1970 with *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*, an instant hit in Europe which proved to be a sleeper of colossal proportions in the United States. Fans of horror and suspense lauded this modest little thriller as an expertly crafted film, and big things were expected from Argento in the years to come. Many critics joined in the praise, and in Italy he was being hailed as "the new Hitchcock," a title that was soon to prove both rash and inappropriate.

When he completed his second item, *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS*, National General snatched it up for distribution in the U.S., and visions of greenbacks danced in their heads. After all, it had two American stars, Karl Malden and James Franciscus, and wasn't Argento's brand of terror proven box office magic? It was not until National General took a good, hard look at what they had bought that they realized they had been double-crossed; Argento had cooked up some kind of arty-farty film! Where was the traditional suspense, where was the emotion, where was the plot? Realizing that this would not set the world on fire, *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS* was dumped on a horror double bill, and was universally booed by the American critics, with the notable exception of some New York magazines (most especially *Cue*). In contrast to this, *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS* was both an artistic and a commercial success in Europe. This dichotomy may best be explained by the fact that U.S. critics don't think very much of Howard Hawks or Sergio Leone either.

It is with *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS*, however, that Argento's style becomes interesting enough for any kind of evaluation. The earlier film, *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*, is a competently made little shocker, with some nice character touches, but certainly nothing more than that. The performances are adequate and, perhaps, in the case of Tony Musante and Enrico Maria Salerno, a bit more, but Argento's treatment of his material is totally straightforward, his editing style utterly traditional, and his mise-en-scene a bit ragged. The central problem with the film is that the images are always tied to Argento's screenplay, which contains some pleasantly bizarre moments, but which for the most part is pretty ordinary. If one thinks that *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE* is Argento's best film, then we are left with

the proposition that he is nothing more than a slightly above-average director who can assemble traditional elements of the horror-suspense genre with efficiency, thus creating films that are pleasant to watch, but certainly unworthy of serious consideration. It is precisely the fact that in his later two films, *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS* and *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*, the narratives are so unimportant to his visuals that he can create films that are so well constructed, while his plots lurch from absurdity to absurdity till they grind to a halt. Argento's mastery of editing and camera movements assert themselves over the limp screenplays until, in *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*, he has effectively liberated himself from all narrative concerns in order to experiment with formal techniques. The reason that *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS* is so weak in many places is that Argento is still struggling with things like plausibility (he shares with Hitchcock a dislike for critics' concern with plausibility) and character development. In *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*, story and script dictate the film's visual style, while in *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS* story and screenplay are in conflict with technique and it is often those scenes least tied to the plot that succeed most. Finally, with *FOUR FLIES*, the script is merely an excuse for the visuals, a series of situations ripe for Argento's creative elaboration.

THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE initiated a new vogue for the previously defunct suspense-thriller genre and spawned over a hundred imitations, with titles like *FIVE GRASSHOPPERS* in *SIN SCARVES*. Up until this time, the suspense-thriller was the province of only a few directors, including Martin Riva, Riccardo Freda and Antonio Margherita. Argento would soon prove rare consequential than any of them, with only Bava posing any kind of a challenge to his reputation. However, after studying most of their films it becomes apparent that even Bava must bow to Argento's greater skill. Margherita's films can occasionally be masable diversions, but more often they're just boring and foolish, and the *SHOW DEVILS* is a lot of fun, his other science fiction and horror epics cannot be justified in any way.

Bava is a more difficult enigma to unravel. He is obviously a director of great talent, and his experience as a lighting director and cameraman has served him in good stead throughout his career. The trouble is, he is simply too uneven, having made some of the worst

WORLD OF DARIO ARGENTO

BY
RICCARDO MENIELLO



and best horror-suspense films in recent memory. For every distinguished effort, such as *DANGER DIABOLIK*, *BLACK SUNDAY* and *BLACK SABBATH*, there are equally disreputable films, like *TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE* and *BARON BLOOD*. The experiment with blue lighting in *WHAT!* is interesting, but this one formal experiment cannot support his pedestrian direction of the rest of the picture. For anyone really interested in Bava's style, his most revealing film is *BLACK SABBATH*. With its triple episode structure, it perfectly mirrors his strengths and weaknesses. The first episode is very good, the second utter trash and the third often superb. However, Argento packs more technical virtuosity into one film than Bava does in ten, and Argento's technique never falls apart as Bava's often does.

In considering *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*, we remember best Tony Musante trapped in the glass anteroom of the art gallery, impatiently pounding on the locked glass doors while Eva Renzi is being attacked by the mysterious psychopath in the gallery. This is an interesting metaphor for Musante's part in the film for, despite his harrowing brushes with death throughout, he can take no definite steps against his attacker because he doesn't know who it is. Musante is to be acted upon without being able to initiate action, and this culminates in his inability to prevent the psychopath from trying to do away with the one he loves most, Suzi Kendall. Musante is intellectually impotent even before the film begins. A writer who of late has been unable to write, he has lost all inspiration and not even his trip to Rome has been able to re-awaken his dormant abilities. In the end, he cannot even save himself from the assassin's blade, and only the timely arrival of the police (in a subjective camera shot that prefigures the camera-as-murderer setup in later films) prevents his being sliced into neat little pieces. It is important to note that nothing said in the film expresses this concept of impotence as eloquently as the shot of Musante trapped behind the glass door.

However, Argento's red herrings are often gratuitous, created merely to prevent us from discovering who the murderer really is. The ridiculous false ending, as well as the phoney "attack" in the beginning which makes the killer seem like a victim, show that in *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE* Argento is more concerned with concealing the killer's identity

than in any of the films that follow. In his later thrillers he will be less and less concerned with "surprise" endings, and more interested in depicting the crimes themselves in a visually creative manner. There is much suspense in many scenes, such as the one where Musante's girlfriend (Ms. Kendall) is attacked by the psychopath. The attack is handled through the use of a complicated montage. Argento constantly cuts from closeups of the girl inside her room, piling furniture against the door in the darkness, to closeups of the killer's hands as he picks at the door with the knife in the hallway. This montage of closeups continues at an ever increasing speed, alternating between the darkness of the room and the light of the hallway, between Kendall's face and the killer's hands, until it culminates in a closeup of the hole the psychopath has wrought in the door as his eye appears at it, and we hear Kendall scream. This final shot acts as a shock because it comes out of nowhere, and is incongruous with the cutting pattern established for the scene. It should be brought out that, though well done, the scene is based on an old shot/counter shot method for creating suspense and is nothing radically new. It is a montage based on contrast rather than linkage, and it is this use of editing that distinguished Argento from Hitchcock, who usually uses linkage montage, which is more difficult to master. Narratively, this is the most cohesive of Argento's films. The story is modest and, the old hat, reasonably well written.

For his next film, *THE CAT O'NINE TAILS*, Argento's script (with Luigi Cori) is so complicated that to summarize it would take this entire article. Suffice it to say that a robbery has been committed at an exclusive center for genetic research, some important papers stolen, and the thief's would-be blackmailer murdered. Franco Arno (Karl Malden) and his little niece are walking home one night and overhear a conversation between the thief and blackmailer, and together with a journalist named Carlo Giordani (James Franciscus) they begin to unravel the mystery. Of course, there is a series of murders committed by the thief who dresses in black, and before the film has ended it has embraced industrial espionage, homosexuality and the theory that a person's criminal tendencies can be discovered by studying his chromosomal configuration (the old XYY story). Karl Malden, as the blind Arno, brings a mean sword-cane, and Catherine Spaak looks fine in her nude scenes but, for the most



From *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*. ABOVE: Tony Musante, trapped behind glass doors, is unable to come to the aid of Eva Renzi. RIGHT: A terrified Susy Kendall tries to drive a knife through the eye of her assailant.



we do not know why. Strangely enough, the answer to "whodunit and why?" is not as interesting as the excellent manner in which Argento poses the question. The denouement, in which it is revealed that a young, super-brilliant research scientist committed the murders and the robbery to prevent people from finding out that he had the unusual XYY criminal chromosomal configuration, is not easily guessed, but who cares? The suspect had only a small part in the film and his motives are pulled out of left field. There is no surprise in this discovery, and surprise is what whodunit audiences want even more than suspense. Thus traditional suspense, rising out of the story and the characters, is not present, and neither is the element of surprise that audiences crave so much. What is here instead is visual suspense, formal inventiveness and an interesting editing style.

Through the use of editing, the director manages to show us parts of the killer as well as all of his crimes. When the blackmailer is killed at the train station, Argento cuts from the crowd to an insert of the killer's eye in closeup, then back to the crowd. In this manner it becomes apparent that the murderer is indeed in the crowd himself. During Arno's and Giordani's trek thru the graveyard, we cut to another closeup of the killer's eye, which tells us that he is watching them from nearby.

The use of overlapping editing plays an integral part in the story. When Arno speaks of contacting Giordani, we cut to a shot of the journalist in his office for a fraction of a second, cut back to Arno talking, and again to Giordani's office for a little longer, back to Arno, and finally to the office again.

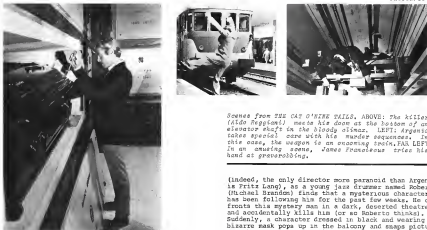
Some candid views of Dario Argento. BELOW: setting up the final shot for *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET* using the high-speed camera. LEFT: Discussing his current film project with his father, Salvatore (right) and Luigi Cozzi.



part, the story is quite hard to follow. There is a very funny scene where Arno and Giordani are forced to do a little grave-robbing in order to obtain some vital information, but Franciscus and Malden look quite bewildered for most of the film.

Visually, however, Argento has created something far superior to *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*. It is with this film that he goes from a scriptwriter with some directing ability, to someone given to bits of brilliance, an artist concerned with creating a complete visual world, and discovering purely formal methods for establishing tension. The opening shot of the film is symptomatic of Argento's new approach. It is night, and the camera prowls around the rooftops, passing odd shapes that turn out to be chimney towers, moving in areas to avoid them, but to what purpose? It finally stops at the Veral Institute and we begin to realize that the camera is taking the point of view of a thief. The rest of the robbery is carried out in this manner, and it is not until the theft is complete that we switch back to an objective point of view. Unfortunately, the opening tracking shot is marred by the credits, such as Welles' similar shot in *TOUCH OF EVIL*. But even with the credits, by skillfully manipulating the audience, Argento has managed to create suspense. Not the type of suspense associated with imminent danger, but one resulting from the eerie appearance of grotesque shapes, as well as Argento's use of the tracking shot. At first, we do not know what is happening; then we become a party to the theft. We are made a part of the crime.

So it is that we are made aware of certain facts while denied others. We know, for example, how the crime was committed down to the smallest detail, but



Scenes from THE CAT O'NINE TAILS. ABOVE: The killer (Aldo Pagliaro) meets his doom at the bottom of an elevator shaft in the bloody climax. LEFT: Argento takes special care with his murder sequences. In this case, the weapon is an oncoming train. FAR LEFT In an ensuing scene, James Franciose tries his hand at grave-robbing.

as Arno enters. This helps to effectively bridge the chronological and spatial gaps in the story.

Another interesting use of editing occurs in the end. The killer falls thru the skylight of the Terzi building and a longshot of his fall (looking down from the skylight) is intercut with a closeup of his hands as the rope turns the pulley. Finally, we cut back to the skylight looking down on the dead man, and over this shot we hear Arno's little niece, whom the killer had claimed to have murdered, calling to her uncle. This is the final shot in the film: we do not see little Lori's release or her reunion with Arno. As a matter of fact, Giordani is last seen with a knife sticking in his shoulder and, while it can be inferred that he freed Lori, none of this is ever shown. This type of ending, which occurs again in FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET, is not for those who demand utter realism and the tying up of all loose ends, but it does allow for maximum impact on the audience after the preceding frenzied violence. We progress from Giordani's struggle with the killer, to the police chasing the culprit across the rooftops, to Arno catching him, to his bloody demise, with no let-up in the action or pace. To permit some emotional epilogue would give the audience a breather, or an outlet for the tension built up to that point. This is precisely what Argento wants to avoid, since he wishes to deny us the cleansing, cathartic happy ending that we are all waiting for. Thus, we are left without the reason for the violence and positive knowledge of Lori's safety to make it all worthwhile. Instead, Argento leaves us with only the violence to remember. This is a statement of style over narrative; it is not what is happening which interests Argento, but the way in which it happens. The events of the ending is to emphasize the nightmarish world of evil and violence. By concentrating on the killer at the end, the various subjective camera setups from the beginning fall into place and suggest a logic to the director's approach. Argento's world is one of continual darkness and evil, with strange forces waiting to match up the unwary and fling them into a pit of chaotic violence. Even the most gentle of souls, Arno, is capable of violence when Lori is threatened. It is no coincidence that priests and religion are almost totally absent from these three films. The only time a priest ever appears is in THE CAT O'NINE TAILS, and he is a contestant in a cursing contest! Perhaps the most peaceful character in the film is the other participant in that contest, a small-time cat burglar named Gigi the Loser. Gigi knows that he will always get caught, but he keeps playing away at his trade.

With FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET, Dario Argento reaches his goal of tailoring his script to his directing style. He weaves a web of terror and paranoia

(indeed, the only director more paranoid than Argento is Fritz Lang), as a young jazz drummer named Roberto (Michael Brandon) finds that a mysterious character has been following him for the past few weeks. He confronts this mysterious man in a dark, deserted theatre and accidentally kills him (or so Roberto thinks). Suddenly, a character dressed in black and wearing a bizarre mask pops up in the balcony and snaps pictures of Roberto and his "victim," but he disappears before Roberto can do anything to stop him. The young musician tries to forget the horrible incident, but soon photos that the puppet-man took begin turning up in Roberto's house and he is forced to tell his wife (Misty Farmer) about the killing.

At the same time, those close to Roberto are being threatened and, in the case of his maid, even murdered. Roberto goes to a homosexual private detective (played with wit and flair by Jean Pierre Marielle) for aid, but soon the killer who has been following Roberto for his wife's welfare, Roberto sends her to the country, but back in the city he has a fling with his wife's cousin (Franche Macittel). Soon, she too joins the maid at Forest Lawn, so Roberto resolves to meet the killer and blast him with a newly purchased revolver. The murderer arrives and is revealed to be his wife, whose hatred for her own father has driven her insane since childhood. When her father died of natural causes, she married a handy father-substitute (Roberto) and decided to take out her sadistic hatred on him. She almost succeeds but for the timely arrival of Roberto's eccentric friend Godfrey (Bud Spencer in a superb bit) who saves the day. She runs off in the family car and smashes into a truck.

This is, by far, Argento's best film. It is here that the subjective camera-as-criminal technique reaches its peak. When the killer goes to meet the man Roberto thinks he has killed, we are the killer. As the "dead" man turns his back to the camera (having just asked for more money to keep silent) we watch as a big candle-holder is raised and, in a fast-forward tracking shot, we follow the killer who bathes the peak at night with a head in. This continues until, in a surprising cut, the camera switches to the victim's point-of-view for a second as the weapon bludgeons the camera lens.

Another example of radical cutting occurs when Roberto's wife holds him at bay with a gun. She fires, we cut to a super-closeup of his shoulder and we see the bullet enter it in slow-motion, after which we cut to a longer shot of Roberto falling back at normal speed. This type of editing, coupled with a constantly roaming, mobile camera, has come to define Argento's visual style, which is becoming more and more refined with each film.

Michael Brandon and Misty Farmer are effective in their respective roles, but the really excellent playing comes from Marielle and Spencer. Spencer is particularly convincing as a harrat who lives on the outskirts of town, an intellectual bum nicknamed "God" who scorns the metallic jungle of the city. There is an interesting comment on society when Roberto meets God at a special "Coffin Show" where the latest in streamliner coffins are on display for you to try on for size. For Roberto, Godfrey represents a viable alternative to the evil metropolis that spawns blackmailers and psychopaths.

In the end, we even feel sorry for the killer,

treated so horribly by her father and the doctors at the asylum. Is it any wonder that she has become even more crazed and vengeful over the years? Jean Pierre Moricelle gives us one of Argento's more memorable losers in *Aroio*, the seamy private eye who has never solved a case; an utter failure until Roberto hires him. His rock confidence masks a hopelessness which all of Argento's characters possess. This is *Aroio*'s first success and he solves the case but, ironically enough, he is destroyed by it.

Music plays an important role in Argento's films. The scores for all three films were composed by Ennio Morricone, arguably the most important composer on the scene today. Morricone's music is invaluable for creating suspense and eerie effects, and Argento uses this music to set the tone for each scene. In retrospect, it is also interesting to note that Argento often uses music to pace a scene and give it a tempo all its own. One remembers the chilling perversity of Morricone's lullaby theme for *THE CAT O' MINE TAIS*, a beautiful serene piece of music which introduces a film of sadism and violence. The terror is often contrasted against music of this type, and Morricone's use of voices as instruments, as well as strange electronic effects, creates a mood of uneasiness, since any usual "hollywood" music would anchor us in the real world. Argento's universe, on the other hand, is one where there is constant suffering, people continually crying for help, strange voices driving madmen to violent

deeds. Morricone's music has affected the horror-suspense genre to a great degree.

This, then, is the universe of Dario Argento. No one is without guilt and no one can escape being touched by the violence and terror that rules that universe. Nobody ever comes out of an Argento film totally innocent or totally untouched.

In the years since Argento became the king of the suspense genre, few Italian thrillers have managed to equal his, and even fewer have been able to avoid copying him in at least some aspects. Among the most notable post-Argento thrillers are Tullio Valerini's *MY DEAR ASSASSIN*, Duccio Tessari's *DEATH OCCURRED LAST NIGHT*, and Tessari's dark allegory of revenge, *THE BLOODY BUTTERFLY*, which almost manages to rise to the level of Greek tragedy. The most interesting challenge to Argento will probably be Sergio Sollima's forthcoming thriller *A DEVIL IN THE SKIN*. Since Sollima has managed to stamp westerns, spy and gangster films with his unique, anarchistic view of life, it will be most interesting to see how he handles a psychological thriller.

After *POOR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*, Argento began producing and supervising a series of four thrillers for RAI-TV in Italy, as well as personally directing two of them. More recently, he has been filming his first neo-thriller, *THE STATE DAYS OF MEXICO*. But, even if he never makes another thriller, it is likely that his influence will continue.

ARGENTO

SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE DIRECTOR

BY LUIGI COZZI

In September of 1940, a son was born to motion picture executive Salvatore Argento and his wife, Elsa Luxardo, a Brazilian photographer. The boy was named Dario and, even as a young child, he grew up with a strong desire to become involved in the fascinating world of filmmaking.

While still quite young, Dario became a contributing writer to one of the major daily papers in Rome, "Paese Sera", where he wrote mostly film reviews. Shortly thereafter, he met and married Maria, a blond secretary in one of Rome's leading press offices. With the birth of their daughter, Fiore, times became rather hard and the Argentos worked long hours just to sustain themselves.

Still, Dario was determined to break into the film industry. Finally, he received his big opportunity when Sergio Leone, king of what has come to be known as the spaghetti-western, commissioned Argento and Bernardo Bertolucci (LAST TANGO IN PARIS) to write the original storyboards for his next epic, which was to be titled *ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST*. Realizing that the chance they had hoped for had arrived, both writers labored long and hard to produce something Leone would like and, of course, their work was ultimately accepted.

As work got around about the Leone storyboard, offers started coming in to write new scripts, mostly westerns. Having earned only \$800 each for their Leone project, both Dario and Bernardo realized that they would have to work quite hard to earn a living as writers. During that period Argento worked out an impressive array of titles, belonging mostly to "B" and "C" grade movies. The readers may recall: *LA RIVOLUZIONE SESSUALE* (SEXUAL REVOLUTION), an almost pornographic episode by Riccardo Olmi; *COMMANDOS*, a war movie today it's *THE TOMBROWN* it's *YOU*; westerns: *PIRE MAN ARMY*, another western; *PROBABILITY* 2380, another war film; and more and more.

Argento was then offered the job of writing the screenplay for a high-budget film, *MEITI, UNA SERA A CERNA*, which was to star Annie Girardot, Florida Bolken and Tony Musante. Although the film turned



out less well than was expected, it was launched as one of the most daring of the new films and garnered impressive returns at the box-office. Argento was beginning to build his career.

Saving became acquainted with Goffredo Lombardo, one of Italy's major producer/distributors, Argento was offered a position which required him to revise all scripts that Lombardo was not satisfied with. Dario accepted, and it was this job which later led him to his directorial debut for a film produced by Lombardo titled *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*.

Argento often claims that he arrived at the idea for *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE* while lying on the beach on holiday in Tunisia. This may be partly true, but at least some of the credit must be given to Bernardo Bertolucci. According to Dario's wife, Bertolucci came to visit one evening extremely excited. He had with him a copy of Frederic Brown's mystery *The Surrealist Escape*, which he believed could be made into a perfect movie. Bertolucci added that he intended to try to buy the rights, so that he might direct the picture himself. He left leaving Dario a copy of the book in order to get his opinion on it.

After reading the mystery, Dario was just as excited about its possibilities. He wished, in fact, that he had the money to buy the rights for himself, but such was not the case. It was while relaxing one day on the beach in Tunisia that he came to the conclusion that, since he liked Brown's idea so much, perhaps he could borrow a bit of it and change it around to form an entirely different plot. Starting to work on the new idea, Dario was additionally influenced by a Mario Bava film he had seen a few years earlier, *THE GIRL WHO KNEW TOO MUCH*. In this picture, a young American tourist comes to Rome and happens to witness a brutal attempt at murder by an unknown madman who has already slain four girls. The tourist is not quite sure that she will be able to recognize the killer, and she is haunted by the fact that some detail has slipped past her memory. In the meanwhile, the near-victim who had been saved

by the arrival of the American, is released from the hospital. The tourist goes to see her, talks with her husband, and tries to remember what it is that she might have missed. Well, in the end, the husband is revealed as the killer and they shoot him down. But, in one final twist, the tourist remembers that what she had actually seen was the girl trying to murder her husband.

When the final reel was completed, Dario began handing it around to producers. Unfortunately, nobody was willing to give him his chance as a director, and **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE** became one of his most rejected screenplays, being turned down by a number of producers and firms. Dario accepted it but, at the very last moment, changed their minds and wanted Terence Young to direct, in order to repeat the success of **WAIT UNTIL DARK**. Argento demanded his script back.

The discussions started, and it was decided that Dario's father, Salvatore, would master the production. Shooting started late in the Fall of 1969, ending early in January. After the first week, Lombardo called Salvatore into his office and told him that he was displeased with the rushes and wanted an old professional, Ferdinando Baldi, to direct the remaining footage. Unable to talk him out of this course of action, Salvatore sadly reported the news to his son. Dario went to speak with Lombardo and, while he couldn't change the producer's mind, he was told that he would receive credit for the film, despite the fact that it would be finished by Baldi. At this point, Dario had no recourse but to agree. He left the office in a state of shock and, during the night, remembered that his contract contained a clause which stated that only Dario Argento could shoot a movie from a script by Dario Argento. He decided to bring that clause to Lombardo's attention, and finish the movie... or there would be no movie.

Lombardo was furious but, of course, had to agree. Dario finished the picture and, as you may know, it became one of Lombardo's biggest money-makers.

THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE opened in Italy early in March. By the end of March, Dario was already working on his next project, another thriller, which was to become **THE CAT O' NINE TAILS**.

Once again, ideas came together from various places. The concept of the double "X" chromosome came from a British thriller called **TWISTED NERVE**. Another idea was borrowed from an old Slodrak thriller, **THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE**, and when the script was ready. Casting began early in July with shooting scheduled to start in August. The picture had been pre-sold to National General who wanted American actors in the leading roles, so Jim Franciscus and Karl Malden were signed. Tina Aumont was originally slated for the part of Anna Terak, but Lombardo obliged Argento to use one of Italy's best known stars, Catherine Spaak, even though Dario didn't feel she was quite right for the role.

Late in September, as Dario was finishing the picture, he approached me to help him write his next thriller. He already had a title in mind: **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET**, even though he didn't really know how to justify it. In fact, he didn't even know what the plot would be! All he knew was that it would open with a scene where a female medium says that all seven members of the scene will soon be killed. As they leave, the medium herself is murdered. Of course, the members begin to die, one by one. In the end, the hero and the police hold

another scene during which the identity of the killer is revealed.

We worked on this idea for quite awhile and almost succeeding in devising a real plot when, in December, something happened. Soffredo Lombardo saw the final version of **THE CAT O' NINE TAILS** and simply didn't like it. He felt sure it would flop, and suggested that Argento stop directing thrillers and work on a project concerning life in prison. Dario was almost to the point of agreeing when American offers started to come in for another thriller. **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE** had scored big in the United States.

We returned to work on the thriller but, by this time, a very similar story had been aired with incredible success on Italian television. So, Dario proposed a new idea: a man is followed by an unknown person in the night and finally stops to face him. They quarrel and the mysterious person is killed. Our man is quite shocked, and doubtly so when he realizes that someone has been witness to his crime. Although he doesn't know who the witness is, some clue leads him to believe it is someone he knows. So our hero begins doing away with all of his friends until he one day realizes the witness was his wife... who would never have said anything to the police.

After some thought, Dario felt that it would be hard for the audience to identify with such a killer. No, the hero simply could not kill. However, what if he only *thinks* he has killed a man?

From that point, we utilized many of the plot twists from our former medium story, which seemed to work well enough. Inspiration for some additional sequences came from Robert Sheckley, Frederic Brown and even Roman Polanski. Many original touches were added, such as the "Eye Machine". I got the idea for that one from a daily paper. Apparently, such a machine actually exists!

When we were finished with the plot, we came to the shocking realization that we still had yet to justify the title that Dario wanted to use! Our original draft had the retained image of a gate in the retina of the victim's eye. The hero then begins to look around at all the gates: garden gates, door gates, etc. Ultimately he realizes that it is not a gate, but a crucifix swinging from the crucifix which his wife carried around her neck and was the last thing the poor victim saw. So, Dario simply changed the crucifix to a piece of jewelry containing a fly.

Next we worked on the murder sequences, which is what Dario cares about the most in preparing his thrillers. One was adapted from a masterful Cornell Woolrich novel, **Black Alibi** (filmed by Jacques Tourneur as **THE EXPART WIFE**); another was inspired by Hitchcock's **TORN CURTAIN** (the idea that it takes a lot to kill a man). So, the package was complete.

The next step was for Dario and his father to begin the long ordeal of selling the new thriller to the highest bidder. It was offered to Universal, Paramount, UA, Warner Brothers, and National Gener-

From **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET**. FAR LEFT: As in **THE INVISIBLE MAN**, scientists attempt to focus on the last sight fixed on the victim's retina before death. In this case, the image is that of a fly. LEFT: Argento and colleagues shooting a subway sequence. BELOW: Luigi Cozzi, behind the mask, snaps blackmail photos of Michael Brandon in an extremely eerie sequence.





ABOVE: Argento prepares to shoot the very first take in his new thriller, *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*. ALIGHT: The third generation of the Argento family takes to the motion picture camera. Dario seems to be teaching the wonders of filmmaking to his somewhat uninterested daughter, Fiore.

at and the sales pitch included the fact the *THE CAT OF BIRN TAILS* had passed into a fantastic box office hit. In the end, Paramount purchased the world-wide rights.

CASTING took a great deal of time for *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*. Fiorinda Balkan was originally thought of for the female lead. Then it was changed to Carla Gravina and later to Stefania Sandrelli. Lisa Gastoni and Catherine Spaak were also considered and, for awhile, it looked as though Claudia Cardinale would be available for the picture. Finally, Dario sort of stumbled onto Mimmy Farmer, who turned out very well. The choice of the hero proved even more difficult. In the beginning, it was to be Tony Musante, star of *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*. But he wanted an extremely high price to do the picture. Dario tried next for Terence Stamp, who agreed providing some changes were made in the character. When Dario refused these alterations, Stamp bowed out and Tom Courtenay was approached. Paramount vetoed this choice and offered to sign either John Lennon or Ringo Starr, neither of whom Dario believed would be good for the role. Jean-Luis Trintignant was asked but had to refuse due to other commitments. Paramount suggested James Taylor, the American pop-singer, whom Dario almost signed, then changed his mind when *TWO LAME BLACK-TOP* proved to be a box office flop. Michael York was then signed for the role but, a few days before shooting was to begin, York called that production on his *KEPPELIN* had been delayed and he could not come as scheduled. Argento could not wait and was forced to seek a substitute. Then he remembered Michael Brandon, a young actor he had seen in *LOVERS AND OTHER STRANGERS*. People had commented that Brandon and Dario looked somewhat alike and, indeed, he was ultimately signed for the role, although nobody (including Dario) was ecstatic about the choice. I was originally supposed to be the script consultant to the production, but when filming began I became assistant director. Our nine-week schedule began July of 1971, a particularly unbearably hot season. We worked out the subway sequence in Milano and spent two days traveling up and back in oppressive heat. We also came quite close to crashing into an oncoming train. The final scene, the high-speed crash, turned out to be one of our very worst problems. I had written the idea into the script and Dario had loved it, so we both wanted it to be something quite eye-catching. We were provided with some fantastic high-speed cameras (used by Antonioni in the conclusion to *ZABRISKI POINT*) which, apparently, had not been used for color work and nobody really understood how it could. Nevertheless, we had to try. So, in the center of a small square, we chained the killer's car to the ground, with the camera set in the back of it. The truck, in front of the



car, had to move backwards into it, thus giving the impression that it was the car which was moving. We had two cars ready for the crash. We settled the camera and started the action. The truck totally demolished the car and stopped just short of polishing off the camera as well.

When the camera case was opened it was discovered that the film, which was moving at an incredible speed (it could only run for three seconds, consuming 50 meters of film), had somehow been crumpled into a number of tiny bits. Not a single meter was saved! And one car had been smashed! We ran several other tests and, each time, the film ended up in the same fractured condition. Dario was climbing the walls; we had only one car left and the shot had to be done immediately. Well, we ultimately discovered that the camera worked fine when loaded with 50 meters of back-and-white film, but not with 50 meters of color which is wound a bit tighter. Using 45 meters, the take came out reasonably well, but Dario requested still another take which was accomplished by piecing together bits of the two smashed automobiles. Most of the sequence used in the final version came from this last take.

The last image in the film is the explosion of the smashed car. This was to be handled by loading the car with gun powder and setting it off by remote control. During the first preparation of this shot the car somehow exploded without being triggered, and two technicians were badly injured. Of course, some rights later the scene was shot successfully, but it put us all through a painful and shocking experience.

In his two previous thrillers Dario enjoyed enacting the role of the killer when his face was not visible to the audience. His are the gloved hands who strangle and slash victims after victim. For some reason, Dario wanted me to take over this sort of thing in *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*. So, I became the mysterious figure in the puppet mask clicking the camera in the empty theatre. I attended the party at Brandon's home and stood by the private eye in the subway car. I was the shadow approaching the victims and the passer-by crossing the dark street at the conclusion when Brandon is awaiting the arrival of the murderer.

Filming the "eye machine" presented some additional difficulties. The electric beam was simply a thin wire which was heated to incandescence. It was so thin, in fact, that it kept crumbling before

we had a chance to shoot the exact scene Dario wanted, so many, many retakes were necessary.

It is interesting to note that, originally, the rock group Deep Purple had been contracted to write the musical score. When they had to cancel at the very last moment, Dario had to call upon his former contributor, Ennio Morricone.

FOUR FLIES was still being edited when Dario began work on his next film, to be titled THE FIVE DAYS OF MILAN. It's a comic venture set during a revolution that took place in 1848. As I write this, shooting has just been completed and the film is slated for release at Christmas, 1973. Dario chose to do a comedy because he feared that audiences might be getting somewhat tired of the usual thriller formula, especially due to the tremendous volume of imitators who have been making pictures so similar to his own. Nonetheless, THE FIVE DAYS OF MILAN has been shot in the style of THE WILD HUNCH, containing much violence and blood, plus every comedy idea Dario and I could think of. The film is aimed almost entirely at the Italian market and, as some releasing companies have already refused it, I doubt that it will be released at all in the United States.

Early in 1972, Dario Argento and myself began writing a movie version of FRANKENSTEIN based on the original James Whale version. The screenplay was submitted to Universal Pictures and was due to be directed by myself and star Timothy Dalton (of AIP'S NUTTERING HEATHENS). Although Universal liked the property, they apparently did not want to produce another Frankenstein film, so Argento routed it over to Hammer's Michael Carreras who told us that Frankenstein was no longer a profitable venture. And so the project died aborning, as Argento wanted to do it only through an American company. Our version, incidentally, was framed in Germany during the early days of Hitler to draw a parallel between Frankenstein's monster and Hitler's monster, Nazism. At the finish, Frankenstein alone chases his creation up into the mountains where they confront each other in the great white expanse of a frozen lake. Frankenstein hits the monster, but bullets alone are not sufficient to stop it. But by shooting at the ice around its feet, he is able to send the creature to a watery grave.

After the Frankenstein project was shelved, Dario and I started work on four television features due to be released overseas as two complete movies. The first, called THE TRAIL, is an hour-long thriller which Argento directed under a pseudonym. Actually,

the teleplay was re-written from a long sequence that was slated to appear in THE HIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE. It stars Enno Cerasuolo and Paola Tedesco, and deals with a murder committed on a crowded train without the other passengers noticing.

The second television feature is THE PUPPET, a psychological yarn written and directed by Mario Foglietti and starring Erika Blanc.

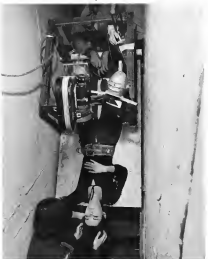
After this, shooting began on my own feature, IL VICINO DI CASA (THE MAN UPSTAIRS) starring Aldo Reggiani, Laura Belli and Mimmo Palmara, written and directed by myself. This picture is somewhat different from the majority of Argento's thrillers in that the audience is aware of the killer's identity from the outset. The tension is derived from the fact that a young couple lives beneath him. There's a lonely house by the sea, a car half-sunk in the sand dunes, a sinister gateway to the rocks near the beach and several other classic horror film touches. It also features scenes from ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN and my former sci-fi venture, TUNNEL UNDER THE WORLD.

Dario and I wrote the fourth feature, titled EYE WITNESS. It utilizes several touches from earlier Argento pictures. For example, at the conclusion, the heroine is left alone in the house. The killer arrives and begins making a hole in the door using a knife. When he enters, she realizes it's her husband who has come to murder her. Though somewhat absurd in plot, EYE WITNESS is filled with shock effects. Roberto Pariana had begun to direct but, when the first rushes came in, Dario decided to take over. The final product is unfortunately not very satisfying. Marilu Tolo, the leading woman, is a strong and humorless woman (you saw her fighting with Richard Burton in BLUEBEARD), the kind you might expect to slap the killer and knock him unconscious. Still, we filled the dialogue with puns and tongue-in-cheek lines, most of which Marilu didn't catch.

As far as future projects are concerned, Dario is planning another thriller to follow THE FIVE DAYS OF MILAN. What he has in mind is something about a married couple whose lives are threatened by some unknown person. In the end, we learn that each other had been threatening the other without either of them knowing it about their mate. But, of course, Dario could change his mind once again.

Concerning Argento's preferences, he enjoys the work of Hitchcock very much and, in general, just loves "whodunits." Among writers, he likes Cornell Woolrich, Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. He has made several unsuccessful attempts to buy the rights to Agatha Christie's FOUR GAY MICE.

On the set, Dario is always extremely nervous. He says that he likes to work in a tense atmosphere and believes that human conflicts provide him with



BELOW: In FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET, Francesca Rocca is struck by the killer's knife and, in an elaborate shot, the camera cranks her as she falls down a flight of stairs. LEFT: Argento and his crew escape the jail.





During the filming of the murder sequences, Argento typically stands in for the killer. ABOVE: The director puts his all into his work as he strangles a victim in *THE CAT O' NINE TAILS*. FAR LEFT: Mike Swandon suffers a similar fate at the hands of his director in *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*. LEFT: Argento plays killer in *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*.

more creative strengths. He always appears enraged ...with the actors, with the technicians, with his father, with everyone. He cares mostly for the camera, and doesn't particularly like working with actors. He usually gives them simple instructions and allows them to play their roles in the way that they prefer, as long as they follow the basic characterization. He shoots scenes of two people conversing by filming the both with the main camera and using two simultaneous cameras for closeups so the scene is in the can in a very short time.

As you may have guessed, Dario likes to get un-

usual effects with his camera and will occasionally spend much time to achieve a particular shot. He also knows when to stop and try something easier; he never loses track of the budget.

His screenplays are always long, rich and detailed, looking almost like a novel. Quite honestly, all of his scripts are far better than the final cinematic versions, good as these may be. *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*, for instance, was a beautiful script, but only a good picture. Had it been shot with the magic and flavor instilled in the screenplay, it would have turned into a terror masterpiece.

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WHY ARE HORROR MOVIES SO AWFUL?

by MARK THOMAS MCGEE

"You like horror movies?" some incredulous person asks you. Your reply, from years of having to defend your taste, is abrupt and defensive: "Yeah. What of it?"

"How could you?" your assailant continues. "They're all such junk!"

You are quick to reply, "But what about KING KONG, THE THING or INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS?" How many more can you conjure up in desperation? Ten? Perhaps even twenty? But aren't you weary of using these same titles in your defenses? Give in. That guy is right. Most horror movies are junk. And just a small amount of observation should tell us why.

It has been said that 98% of everything produced in this world is trash. Personally, I think that this statement is a little harsh and that the percentage should be broken down to include those things mediocre, but to make matters simpler we'll let the statement stand as it is. So, applying this value judgement to the horror film (and let's include science fiction and fantasy), is it fair to expect the genre to produce more than it's share? We must certainly have 2% worth of good horror pictures. Unfortunately, this is where the field must invariably suffer an inherent burden. Regardless of the quality of a western, love story or a detective drama they are, unlike the fantasy film, about real things. People do fall in love, people do commit crimes and the west, however fictionalized, did exist. Something more, however, is demanded from a horror or fantasy film. It must, if the audience is to react with any real feeling to the events and characters of the story, make that audience suspend their disbelief. (This is assuming that the members of the audience are capable of feeling anything at all; an assumption which may, I fear, may not always be valid.)

So we have determined that problem one is inherent. It can't be helped. Problem two is related.

If the audience is supposed to suspend disbelief then surely the horror film, above all of the others, must be that much more carefully constructed, in planning and execution. But the most imaginative of all the genres has received the most banal of treatment. Why? One answer is exploitation. Filmmakers must be concerned with the commercial aspect of their investment. After all, films are a business.

Success is the means to continue what is left of the art. And the fantasy film is the leading contender for exploitation. Very few other genres offer such a high explosive value for so little an investment. Construct a monster suit, have a few bloody murders (at least enough for the trailers) and then get the art department to lie like hell and design a spiffy poster. (American-International Pictures built an empire on this kind of marketing.) It's certainly easier and more economical than hiring ten thousand extras for a re-creation of the Battle of the Bulge. So the field attracts the "quickie" producer who is concerned only with getting his film "in the can," precisely the spot on the anatomy, appropriately enough, where the viewer receives it.

It seems almost superfluous to add that people like Sam Arkoff, Sam Katzman, Larry Buchanan, Al Zimbalist, Jerry Warren, David Hewitt, Bill Seandine or Sigmund Neufeld (to name just a few) are in the film industry strictly for the money. A partial check-list of their films reveals little or nothing in the way of creative thought or effort. Who but a hard-core horror buff could manage to sit through VOODOO WORMS, CRABE OF THE SWAMP, CREATURE, VALLEY OF THE DRAGONS, INCREDIBLE PETRIFIED WORLD, THE LOST WORLD, THE APE MAN, THE MONSTER MAKER, CURSE OF THE FACELESS MAN or SONTAR? The complete disregard of plot construction, or even professionalism in these films is an indication that their creators knew the stuff was venomous. But they have no qualms about promising better on the posters. Theatre posters are notorious for lies. But it is always necessary? Granted, the destruction of a city as illustrated in the advertising for THE MONSTER THAT CHALLENGED THE WORLD would have been costly (and

BELOW: "The audience is laughing at Michael Cough. They don't take these film's seriously." A quote from Herman Cohen, producer of KONG. RIGHT: Bert Gordon's ATTACK OF THE POPPET PEOPLE was the only story which was within his limitations, so it was his most enjoyable.





Bert I. Gordon's *AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* (ABOVE) is a prime example of judging the works. Gordon assumed that *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN* (LEFT) in reverse would be just as interesting and just as successful. He was wrong on both counts.

impossible since the monster wasn't even one-fifth the size that the illustrations depicted, but would it have really broken the budget to have Vincent Price carrying someone's head as shown on the *HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL* ad? Now, granted, Richard Lang did carry a head around in one sequence and I don't mean to imply that if Price had done the honors it would have made the picture any better, but it's obviously what the audiences wanted to see when they entered the theatre. It's a deliberate cheat-o. And what little kid didn't "boo" when the camera pulled back to reveal the technical staff shooting a movie during the opening chase sequence of *FRANKENSTEIN* 1970? It was flouting the fact that the producers knew what you wanted to see, what you came to see and, from the advertising what you had every right to expect to see. I suppose all that I'm saying is that there's nothing worse than a film that isn't even what it purports to be, however empty the promise. Nothing is worse than a film that doesn't deliver the goods. A cheat-o.

Problem two was exploitation. And it leads directly to the final problem which is attitude, a factor we'll explore on its many different levels.

"Only by taking me back to his primitive past can man hope to survive." This is not an exact quote from *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*, but it's close enough. This is the premise, the plot of the film. "Gutter-brained" of course. It's a credit to Walt Blaisell's shilly as an actor that he was able to say the line without a smirk. [on the subject of *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* and *TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN*, Mr. Blaisell is quoted as saying: "It wasn't easy, believe me."] With a title like *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* it is implied that its producers wouldn't have you take their offering seriously, although they're always quite serious about taking your ticket money. You are supposed to have fun with it. But there's nothing fun about a boring movie. And this attitude brings to mind another list of names—producers like Herman Cohen and William Castle who honestly don't believe that they contribute adversely to the field but who do as much damage as the Jerry Warrens or Dave Hewitts. "The audience is laughing at Michael Gough. They don't take these films seriously." That's a quote from Herman Cohen, producer-writer of *TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN*, *KONGA* and *TRON*. I have to agree with his statement. Only it isn't that the audience don't take "these" films seriously, only "his" films. Why should they? He doesn't. And they definitely should be laughing at Michael Gough if they aren't already. He's most

ridiculous. His performances are unbelievable and always border on bad taste. And with Gough looking more wizen and stiff with each passing year it seems only just that he should be cast, uncredited, as a corpse in *LEGIONS OF HELL HOUSE*. It's the audiences' ultimate laugh on him. But the flippant attitude of producers like Cohen is especially contemptible when you consider how much easier it is to poke fun at what you're doing than it is to make an honest effort to run the risk of failure. An audience can always feel superior to, and be amused by, unintentionally funny films, but to make a "camp" picture for everyone is to homogenize a subject to such an extent that it will probably be funny to no one. This is not to say that a deliberately contrived camp film cannot be funny, but I always derived more pleasure from something incompetent like *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* than I ever did from a *TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN*.

However, a serious attitude is no guarantee of a good product. [I personally found this to be true after working on *ECUADOR* which is so awful that one would think it was intentional.] Recap three of our creators in proof: Charles Schneer, Ray Harryhausen, Irwin Allen, Bert I. Gordon and George Pal.

What all three of the groups mentioned have in common is that they apparently can recognize quality when they see it but they can't seem to duplicate it. Harryhausen's *20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH* was a sort of remake of *KING KONG* and Bert Gordon's *AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* was *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*.

What does make a film tick? These men don't seem to know the answer. Perhaps an examination of a few particulars might give us a clue.

KING KONG is a giant gorilla brought back from an uncharted island to civilization where he breaks loose and does extensive damage until he is eventually shot from atop the Empire State Building. This way, at first, sound similar to a great number of giant creature films. What makes *Kong* better than, say, *THE VALLEY OF GWANGI* or *20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH* is the device of linking the characters of the story to the monster. In *Kong's* case it's his love for the girl. This gives the story its conflict and lets the audience share the spirit of self-sacrifice, a truly human quality which endears *Kong* to the audience. We also have to admire Jack Brice, the girl's lover, for daring all odds to save her. So we have two heroes and we like them both, even though *Kong* has the better lines. In films like *GWANGI* or *20 MILLION* the monster remains a separate entity from the characters. So if the monster is sympathetic there is a good chance you won't like the people because their only function

will be to destroy the monster. And if you have no feeling for the monster (*GODZILLA*, *DEADLY MANTIS*, *MONSTER OF FIEDRAS BLANCAS*, etc.) then you can't

possibly respond to the film since the characters still have only one function: monster exterminators. Some of these films, such as *THE GLIMPSE CLAW*, *HEADY HUNTER* or *IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA* make an attempt to add a documentary flavor to the proceedings to bolster interest, but it usually fails. With no link between the monster and the characters the monster remains nothing more than a natural disaster. One is left with only the spectacle and a long-winded goal with an inevitable outcome.

This is not to say that spectacle films are necessarily poor. At least in Harryhausen and Pal films the goods are delivered. But spectacle, for its own sake, is diverting much in the same way that an automobile accident is -- it's rarely, if ever, engaging. Toppling buildings, death rays, explosions, etc., all make for an impressive visual show but even this sort of excitement, when administered in large, uninterrupted doses, will produce apathy. The Japanese are masters of this sort of filmmaking. And when even the spectacle is neutralized by unconvincing special effects (*VIKING WOMEN* & *THE SEA SERPENT*, *SPHILICUS*, *LOST CONTINENT*—both versions) the viewer is left with no satisfaction. Nothing is worse than spectacle films without the spectacle. It's like going to see *HEB-BUR* and getting an episode of *CIVILIZATION* narrated by Kenneth Clark. It's another chortle.

George Pal, an old hand at the fantasy film, loves to fill his screens with visual zazzle and has his most successful film, in terms of content, and possibly box office, was the one picture he directed that had miserably unconvincing technical effects (which, naturally, won an academy award) -- *THE TIME MACHINE*. Why was it better than his other films? It

had a three-dimensional and likeable character with a purpose to his life. It's basically the same reason why Pal's *DESTINATION MOON* is now a tedious bore and its copy, *ROCKETSHIP X-9*, is not. *HUMAN DRAMA* is infinitely more interesting than the visual excitement. For all of its visual effects *FANTASTIC VOYAGE* might just as well have been a mountain climbing or desert saga.

It might be interesting to note that the natural disaster monster eventually met a similar fate as that which befell the Frankenstein Monster when he ceased to have any human qualities. The monster became a straight man for Abbott and Costello; the "N.U." monster has been reduced to a wrestling clown. Even the venerable Godzilla has gone from being a menace to a protector.

Now, I've stressed that human drama is important. I didn't say that it was a commodity which insured a good film. Bert I. Gordon's *AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN* is a prime example of fudging the works. Gordon assumed that *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN* in reverse would be just as interesting and just as successful. He was wrong on both counts. Richard Matheson knew that the focus of his script should be a human story. It's the victim of a poisoning which caused him to shrink an inch a day. Watching the familiar world around him become gigantic and alien was something to which everyone could relate. But the giant man, Glenn Manning, in the desert area was housed by a housewife. It's somewhat difficult to be concerned about a man who could simply crush his enemies. Poor Robert Scott Carey was practically defenseless. Gordon further compounded his error by spending the better half (if that's the proper term) of his story with the doctors who were trying to find a cure and later with the military as they tracked the escaped giant. I don't think that anyone in the audience watching *THE SHRINKING MAN* was hoping that they would cut away from his cellar adventures to see how Doctor Silver and company were doing back at the lab. And when *THE COLOSSAL MAN* does spot-light Glenn Manning he's hitching. "What terrible sin could a man commit in a single instant to bring this upon himself?" One of these statements would be forgivable and natural. But Manning is constantly wailing: "I don't want to grow anymore!" And his harassment of the poor army sergeant who brings him his food is nothing short of sabotage. It is difficult to feel sorry for someone who is an embodiment of self-pity. And Manning is always crying in his beer.

We must also not forget that at the conclusion of *THE SHRINKING MAN*, Scott Carey has battled all odds, struggled with his inner self, to emerge a better person. For the experience, Glenn Manning is simply blasted off of Boulder Dam which may have been his punishment for being such an unpleasant hero.

That such an awful script could have been written is part of the Hollywood philosophy which believes that a writer is the least important member of a film staff when actually having a good script is more important than a good director. Crap is crap no matter who directs it. And isn't it amusing when watching the work of a writer who knows what he's doing. Compare, for instance, three films: *THE INNOCENTS*, *THE HAUNTING*, *THE LEGEND OF HILL HOUSE*. The writers of *THE INNOCENTS*, William Archibald, Truman Capote and, of course, Henry James, were aware that explanations for supernatural events are ultimately disappointing. The reason for this is simple: in order for the audience to relate to an explanation it must be based on human experience. The unnatural is explained in natural terms, i.e. the jealousy of the ghost in *THE UNINVITED*. The writers of *THE HAUNTING* knew this so they had no explanation which, in its own way, can be just as bad. Richard Matheson's *HILL HOUSE* had a let-down ending but he, at least, had the good sense to pepper the rest of his story with fast action. *THE INNOCENTS* had the solution; the explanation for the events is revealed half-way through the film. So instead of building to a big revelation, which is inherently disappointing, the film could build on the efforts to thwart the problem. And the subtlety of *THE INNOCENTS* is even more fun, as it is with any film. Even a fast action picture like *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* has a few subtle touches. This was a film directed by Don Siegel which told the story of an alien invasion into a small California town. The invaders were used pods which had the ability to duplicate and replace their luckless victims. The only discernible difference between the originals and the dupes was the lack of emotion. The pod people had no emotion or feeling... only the instinct to survive. A few members of the

BELLOW: INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS can only be appreciated by those members of the audience who have not, as yet, become pods themselves. **BOTTOM:** Almost every good horror film has been made by someone unconnected with the genre. John Frankenheimer, for example, directed *SEVENS*.



community notice the change in their relatives and friends and begin seeking help from Dr. Miles Bennell portrayed by Kevin McCarthy. Early in the film, while he is on a date with an old school chum, Becky Briscooll, Miles runs into a psychiatrist friend who informs him that this delusion is wide-spread. Miles looks at Becky and says: "I hope we don't catch it. I'd hate to wake up some morning and find out that you weren't you." She replies: "I'm not the high school kid you used to romanticize, so how can you tell?" He looks at her and asks: "You really want to know?" She nods and he kisses her, replying: "Hmmm. You're Becky Briscooll." This is precisely the way that he discovers she has been duplicated toward the end of the film, by a kiss. Actually, the entire film is a subtle warning to the world that people are becoming like the pods, devoid of humanity and feeling. That's why Don Siegel wanted his film to end with the doctor screaming into the camera, at the audience, "YOU'RE NEXT!" His film wasn't about an alien invasion, it was about loss of humanity. But the studio heads objected and forced Siegel to tack on a beginning and ending narrative which isn't so much objectionable as it is unnecessary. Unfortunately, this film can only be appreciated by those members of the audience who have not, as yet, become pods themselves. Loss of humanity means nothing to someone who doesn't understand what you're talking about. Surely we can blame the pod people for ignoring brilliant films like THE INNOCENTS and SECONDS and even THE BODY SNATCHERS which were all box-office failures. We're outnumbered. But I've wandered off the track. I was talking about the role of the screenplay writer. Let's finish by saying that he's possibly the most important creator on the picture.

Back tracking to the script deficiencies of THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN, it might be proper to mention that the film is also a cheat-o. When Gordon made his FANTASTIC PUPPET PEOPLE it was the only story which was within his limitations, both financially and creatively, so it was his most enjoyable. But THE COLOSSAL MAN goes way beyond its capabilities. The budget could not allow the extensive destruction of Las Vegas promised by the advertising, but instead of shooting a few isolated desert sequences, something they might have been able to do correctly, they cut corners and had the giant in Vegas anyway. Why? Not because it would make the film more exciting, because it didn't, but so that they could promise better than they could afford to deliver. Was there anyone who actually enjoyed this dull and unexciting farce? And there are many films which suffer from this short-changing. If you can't afford 2001 then shoot FURBISHES PLACE. If BODY SNATCHERS is beyond your means, do an UNIDENTICAL STRANGER. There is honestly no point in shooting a cheapie picture on a kool-aid budget.

Then there's the problem of type-casting, which works equally well against the men behind the camera as it does for the actors. The audience is partially to blame for this situation, demanding to see the same actors playing the same parts. The last thing the world needs is another Dracula movie with Christopher Lee, or another Frankenstein movie with Peter Cushing. Both stars are aging to such an extent that the only suspense their films generate is that of wondering if they will live through the entire production. Both are fine actors, but there's no question about that. But the need to be in every horror film made. This also goes for Vincent Price and a number of other actors that are hardly worth mentioning. In the same breath it must be stated that even critics are partially responsible for this labelling. Terence Fisher, veteran horror director at Hammer Films in England has been called a horror expert, merely because he has directed so many horror pictures. He's competent enough and I'm sure he brings his films in on time, but an expert? No more so than William Castle is, the producer that finally had to enlist the aid of a good director to insure that all of his films would not be forgotten. And if Fisher is an expert, then why were THE GOONER and HOUSE OF FRIGHT such bloody bores? And why, even when he's working from fairly decent scripts, are films like CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF and HORROR OF DRACULA handled in such a pedestrian fashion? Fisher probably doesn't understand the first thing about true horror. And there's certainly never anything resembling subtlety employed in his films. But then we must consider the company for which he is working. Wasn't it this same Hammer Films whose staff spent hours discussing that all of the actors in WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH is to be covered with thousands of small dots that their bodies would look away. This was a major issue. They wanted to be realistic, to tell it like



As good as TARANTULA (ABOVE) was, one must still remember that it followed on the heels of 2001 (TOP).

it was. Didn't anyone ever once worry about the fact that men and dinosaurs were several millions of years apart? It's a miracle that such a studio could give birth to a film like FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH. (It must have been a bastard.)

This "expert" tag, which is permanently stuck on anyone who has been trapped in one area too long, moves us right along to what I call the Harry Essex Syndrome, which is the motion picture version of the Oscar Wilde syndrome. [When Oscar Wilde was sent to prison he was put in charge of book-binding, the logic being that if he could write books he could probably bind them.]

Harry Essex was a studio staff writer at Universal who was assigned to do the script for the studio's first 3-D film, IF COME FROM OUTER SPACE. Since the film was a minor success, Essex was called forth again to write their follow-up 3-D picture, CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON. This is to imply that it takes some special talent to write a 3-D script. The next step, naturally, is to assume that Harry Essex is also qualified to direct a 3-D film, which he did. We can see several examples of this sort of nonsensical thinking. Who but Eugene Lourie could be trusted with the job of directing CONGO. After all, he directed BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS and THE GIANT BEASTHOLE. Willis O'Brien was hired to assist in the re-make of THE LOST WORLD despite the fact that the studio had no intention of using stop-motion puppets which was O'Brien's field. But O'Brien was used on the original LOST WORLD! Make sense? About as much as hiring Paul Frees to do the inarticulate grunts for THE CYCLOPS. Anyone, including Bert Gordon, the director, could have those noises and saved the studio several thousands of dollars. But Paul Frees was known for his cartoon voices and

imperfections. You see what I mean? It's the same sort of logic that hires Robert Fowley to narrate a show about death because he played Dr. Marcus Welby on television series. It's a habit -- some associative reflex gone mad. The Harry Essex syndrome.

Another not so surprising revelation is the fact that almost every good horror film has been made by someone unconnected with the genre. Don Siegel directed *INVASION OF THE BORN SNACKERS*; Jack Clayton, *THE WITCHES*; Robert Wise, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*; Howard Hawks, *THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD*; John Frankenheimer, *SCREAMS*. Once the genre became tainted by people like Nicholson and Arkoff, by studios like Allied Artists and Tobo, no self-respecting craftsman would go near a horror picture. In the 30's, when the horror film was beginning in America, it was up to craftsman like Ted Browning and James Whale to shape the field, but it was the 40's that really made the horror cycle. *ABYSS* & *CASTLE MEET FRANKENSTEIN* was the best horror film Universal had made since *THE WOLFMAN* in 1941. The second horror cycle, in the 50's, outnumbered the 40's three-to-one in the production of good films. But by the mid-fifties all the real talents (after having paved the way for the hacks) abandoned the field, and "hacks" I certainly need to include Universal who did their share to burn out the first cycle and only cautiously re-entered the second with misapplied pictures like *REVENGE OF THE CREATURE* and *CULT OF THE CONGA*. As good as *TARANTULA* was, one still must remember that it followed on the heels of *THRILL*. And toward the end of the 50's Universal's product was no better than ATP or Roho's with films like *THE THING WHICH WENT DOWN* and *THE CURSE OF CANNIBALS*. The fans were forced to rely on people like Jack Arnold and George Pal who weren't great, but they were miles ahead of anyone else around. After 1956, the only good horror films made in America were *THE INCREDIBLES*

SHRINKING MAN and *THE FLY*. It took the English film like *CURSE OF THE DEMON* or *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED* to save what was left of a dying genre. Even Hammer's product by 1961, eventually becoming little more than a showcase for heaving breasts and graphic murders. One of their latest offerings, *COUNTER DRACULA*, is as predictable as it is dull. The cut-away scenes of the Countess' daughter were so unrelated and unnecessary to the development of the story they warranted my wife of those awful insert shots Universal used to shoot for some of their network sold films when they weren't long enough. I honestly think the next thing she expected to see in the film was that Freeze-frame technique Allied Artists used to lengthen their horror films when they were sold to TV.

In the midst of films like *ASTOUNDING AGE-MONSTER*, *DRACULA-PRINCE OF DARKNESS*, and *I EAT YOUR FLESH*, films such as *I BURN THE LIVING*, *RIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* or even *MONSTER FROM THE CAMPUS* begin to look pretty good. Since Hitchcock's *PSYCHO*, and the less restrictive censorship code, the horror film has been reduced to sadistic exercises in carnage. Admittedly, excessive cleavage is preferable to excessive violence; both are objectionable if that's all the film has to offer. And films like *DR. PHILIP*, which make a joke out of hideous murder, are more than just sick, they're irresponsible. Films are a form of communication and, if not a great influence, certainly an influence. The artist also belongs to the community and so must be responsible for his work. The field has become so corrupt that the fans are desperate. A film that has the slightest hint of respectability is pounced upon like a leg of lamb tossed to a starving animal. Praise is showered on films like *PLANET OF THE APES*, *THE NIGHT STALKER*, *SILENT RUNNING* and even *VAMPIRE LEVENS* when, in actuality, these films are little better than programmers and, in comparison with any other field, would be thought of as a little better than "B" pictures. Stanley Kubrick was just nose-thumbing when he made *2001*. He just wanted to prove it could still be done. But the fan can't expect the Kubricks to come along very often. Instead, expect *AMOUS* and Hammer films to keep up the bad work abroad, and ATP to give us more of the same at home.

(continued from page 5)

society, Roman Polanski can, perhaps, understand some of the reasons for the brutal slaying of his wife. "Wuff said"

SCREAMING SKULL /** Husband's attempts to drive his wife insane are thwarted by supernatural intervention. Alex Nicol proves himself capable both before and behind the camera, managing to bring this minor effort above its lurid title and sleazy ad campaign. Really delivers the goods.

THUNDER: BATTLE /** Extensive use of still photographs of deserted city streets do nothing to make this story of a robot invasion more convincing. All attempts to capture the urgency of *WAR OF THE WORLDS* have failed. And Dick Reeves doesn't help matters, either! For insomnia only.

THING, THE /** Super-carrot invades earth. It's small wonder that Howard Hawks not only refused to take directing credit for this mess, but tried to blame it on his film cutter. Story is confined to an arctic military base, eliminating fear of world conquest by alien. Low budget robs audience of a view of the alien's space craft or even the alien itself (which turns out to be nothing more than Jim Arness with a bald head). What is left is a bunch of military cut-ups and a lot of ice. A real snow job.

TIME MACHINE, THE /** Over simplified version of this classic is also sabotaged by unconvincing special effects. Exciting climax virtually ruined by obvious studio interiors and Clem Caddledogger-type monsters. Producer Pal should have left directorial chores to Byron Haskin, the man responsible for Pal's earlier triumphs, most notably the superior *WAR OF THE WORLDS*. Rod Taylor is pretty good.

50,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA /** Excellent art direction does not a good film make. Inducement of seal for comic touch shows that Disney can never completely break free of his cartoon beginnings. Jules Verne deserves better.

THICK GOLD PARS /** Stimulating trilogy of Hawthorne stories with versatile Vincent Price in all three segments. "Rapunuchi's Daughter" a stand-out.

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY /** No story, no acting, just visual razzle-dazzle in this over-rated clattertrap with a nebulous ending that has every fool supplying an answer. If this had been made by anyone other than Stanley Kubrick, and if it hadn't been picked up by all of the acid-heads, it almost certainly would have been a failure.

UNEARTHLY STRANGER /** Scientist discovers that he married a monster. Insnail, talky, confusing British garbage is not helped by easily obtainable Janet Blair or Dick Reeves.

VAMPIRE, THE /** Even John Beal can't save this cheapjack story about a doctor who mistakes bat pills for aspirin. If you think it sounds silly...

VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED /** Beware of the eyes that anesthetize! This may be the film that lulled George Sanders into such a state of boredom that he committed suicide.

WAR OF THE WORLDS /BOMB/ Flavor and intensity of Wells' story is needlessly sacrificed by a change of locale and up-dating the story for the express purpose of using the atomic bomb on the Martians. Character and story are completely lost as film becomes a showcase for special effects. Pedestrian direction by Byron (CAPTAIN SINBAD) Haskin demonstrates that he is the least qualified to direct a film of this magnitude and producer George (ATLANTIS) Pal should have stuck to his puppetoons. And Dick Reeves doesn't help matters, either!

"And So We End An Age"



A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE LON CHANEY

BY

FORREST J ACKERMAN

Across a span of nearly 60 years, the words of HOWELLS from THINGS TO COME come to mind in relation to Lon Chaney, Jr.

Raymond Massey (reflecting on "the Boss"): "Dead, and his world died with him."

Sir Cedric Hardwicke as Theotocopolous, believing he would thwart Man's conquest of space: "And so we end an age."

It is evident to me, sitting at my editorial desk, sifting through hundreds of letters addressed to me in my capacity as film poster historian, that the popular feeling is that, with the death of Lon Chaney, the last link with the Golden Age of horror films, the Universal classics, has come to an end. Karloff, Lugosi, Clive, Frye, Bains, Rathbone, Whale, Pierce, Freund et. al., up to the most recent loss of Glenn Strange; one by one the Great Ones have left the stage of life. Dead, and their worlds dead with them -- except for their simulacrum of life that still stirs the silver screens & haunts the phosphor tubes of TV sets.

If Lon Chaney wasn't the best Dracula the screen ever presented (he wasn't) nor the best Frankenstein monster, he wore his mummy rags with distinction as Kharis; and certainly as the Invisible Man was to Claude Rains and the Werewolf of London to Henry Hull, THE WOLF MAN was all Lon Chaney's.

And, of course, the lost little child in a giant man's body: OF NICE AND MEN.

Larry & Lenny, a pair of roles uniquely his own, for posterity.

In Famous Monsters, several months prior to his death, I called for a reader response in "Cheers for Chaney", concealing the sad family secret that "the cobalt treatments were killing him." In FW 105 it was too late for comfort and the emphasis changed to "Tears for Chaney". There is no doubt that, in the 16 years since organized film poster magazines came on the publishing scene, the death of Lon Chaney, Jr. has been one of the major losses, one

of the most universally mourned passages of a motion picture personality.

Perhaps his demise, at this time, was for the best -- only from the standpoint of his film career, of course; his devoted wife made it lovingly evident that she would have wished for again as many years with him as she happily shared. But his prime as an actor had passed -- roles like those in CANNIBAL DRUG, THE FACE OF THE SCREAMING WEREWOLF and FRANKENSTEIN VS. DRACULA scarcely contributed anything memorable to his filmography.

Still, as Boris Karloff gave us a masterpiece in the twilight of his life -- TARGETS -- it is conceivable that Lon might, had he lived without the curse of the cancerous throat and been given the right role, the right director might have extracted one more great performance from him in the declining years of his life.

Like Lugosi before him, dreaming of a 3D technicolor cinematic stereophonic remake of DRACULA, Lon longed to do his own screenplay, THE GILA MAN, with his own flesh-&-blood sons sharing roles with him.

He dreamed, in the last month of his life -- and, more than dreaming, he was actively preparing for the performance -- he was within weeks of appearing in person in a stage revival of ARSENIC AND OLD LACE.

And he dreamed of completing his book, 100 YEARS OF CHANEYS. Surely some collaborative hand will complete it for him.

Well...

The moon is no longer full and bright, Larry Talbot. It has been eclipsed by your passing and can trouble you no more. Only we who remain behind are troubled by your passing. The flesh is weak and we trust you will forgive us our trespasses upon your last wishes that no publicity be attendant upon your death. I am but one of many who could not let your passing pass without an expression of feelings.



Before locking grips with what specifically is presented in M.G.M.'s Stanley Kubrick Production, 1931 - A SPACER OBVIOUS, we turn off our brains, bridges and what-else-yes by stating: "I don't know what I think of this picture, but I think it's a rotten picture at its first appearance." I rather think my reactions are like those that by Tina Turner lovers when first comedy was shown in the 1960's. I think it's a rotten picture, being one of the four or five funniest films I have ever seen. It was actually number among the considered classics of the screen. I think it's a rotten picture, being one of the funniest, with which I am wholly agreeable and moreover I am in agreement with the perception. With the release of "Kooli," Mr. Kubrick was recommended to use economical and complete film making working in the studio.

In the following pages I hope to justify my opening remarks and to discuss the film itself while attempting to explain some misunderstandings and reply to some of the slanders which have grown up about the film. Whether I succeed will be up to you & future generations who must either cast a heavily-judged eye at my "manifesto" or vindicate my remarks and accept the film as a masterpiece.

My entire life has seemed to be spent within the confines of theaters and screening rooms. I have persistently turned my bright vision upon the most joyful and saddest films. I love them all. There are those I regret having been made because I had seen less than however cynical I know them to be; however, I feel no sorrow how wretched, there is always something to be learned from them. It may be film making and laughing, a particular scene, or the lighting and lighting. I have seen a line of dialogue, the flow of a certain camera or a bit of business drawn up by an extremely disinterested director, with each of these "instances" my faith is bought or bolstered.

that much more. Even the most impoverished production will invariably render up two or three of these "moments," and naturally the more there are, the more respect I have for the film. What all this is intended to indicate is - I have never encountered a film with such a plethora of these "moments."

Stanley Kubrick has chosen that elusive mode, suspense fiction, as the nominal manner of approach in "2001" and I would not consider criticizing him for it.

Fateful perhaps, but many filmmakers subconsciously answer at such as idea. Like the critic's remark that "pre-ecogeneration with *Biger* has as the sign of an arrested development," many people and critics see in science fiction a basically adolescent infatuation: a stumbling block, if you will, which, like bed-wetting, must be overcome before achieving adulthood.

must be synthesized before achieving creative maturity.
How far away we know this to be, and how redundant of me to
waste your time elaborating the condition. Yet this is precisely
the stance many intellectuals and professional critics have taken
upon viewing "SOUL" - a victim and seeking deconstruction, surely
aware that Swoback had won in him this time, this prize, this junior
high school exercise.

Films are first a medium of visual form and movement. That is what their name connotes. Not since the advent of sound has any film needed so minimal recourse to dialogue. This is not to deride dialogue, but the silence in motion pictures, as they now are, would be that film which met its purpose and made its goal and never required the speaking of a single word. Not since the genesis has any one man with any one film so revolutionized

Proximity makes the vision blur, yes I do again see my film to shake my cinematic volitionally.
After "1900," everything else is just movies

That Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer should give Stanley Kubrick carte blanche on the preparation of his next project after DR. STRANGELOVE, is overpowering testimony to the success of that national, blackly-beautiful film. Artistic freedom is a blessing (or a curse) of which few artists can boast, especially in the film medium. Seldom since Welles has there been ultimate justification for the inevitable expenditures. What makes this particular vision so successful and penetrating and so justifies the monies spent, is Kubrick's unyielding belief in what he is saying and his ability to present his message with incisive originality.

In past exercises, Kubrick appeared to be an acidulous and facile pessimist; one who could profess "entertainments" that also laid bare an ultimately sassy core in our civilization. With the exception of SPARTACUS, a film he took over and directed as a personal favor to Kirk Douglas, each Kubrick film has that unmistakable aura of corruption about it: from the frenzies of FEAR AND DESIRE and KILLER'S KISS, and the nitty-gritty sleekness of THE KILLING, through the fatalism of that classic anti-war document PATHS OF GLORY, and the sad, sick worlds of Humbert Humbert and LOLITA. It is now evident that Kubrick ought to be numbered among post-humanist directors, though admittedly with grave doubts as to our ability and directions, but nevertheless for rather than against mankind.

Kubrick's directorial design is of a piece, with nothing obligatory or derivative, but ever enforcing, even enlarging his statement. With "2001" Kubrick has fashioned a sermon for our time.

THE SYNOPSIS

Late in the Tertiary Period of Earth's development, during the Pliocene Age, a small band of soon-to-become-human apes exists in a tenuous peace with the furious forces of nature. The fruits and berries and roots that are their staple diet are unwillingly shared with tapers and other beasts; similar tribes of their own species steal their watering place, and great cats daily threaten their existence.

Unexplicably one day-break, the band is "visited" by a large and shadowless reclinable form which appears in their midst and is immediately worshipped as a super-natural object. Some time later, one of the apes, Moon-watcher (Daniel Richter), equates a bone fragment as a means by which he can burn live food; a concept which was unheard of until the arrival of the slab. From here it is only a short step to weaponry and Moon-watcher finally leads an attack against the usurping band of apes to retrieve the watering place. When one of the "enemy" is killed, the day is won and in the glory of triumph, the weapon is hurled high and kaleidoscopes into a space probe vehicle. Along with it, we are plunged in medias res: 2001.

Aboard the Pan-Am space liner Orion III, is Dr. Heywood R. Floyd (William Sylvester), Chairman of the National Council of Astronautics. Floyd is destined for the permanent American base on the moon at Clavius. After a brief stop-over at Space Station five, where he is questioned about his journey by a group of friendly but suspicious Russian scientists and technicians headed by Elena (Margaret Zuyak), Dr. Kiselni, Dr. Svetniva and Dr. Andreas Symak (Lacard Mossiter), Floyd continues his trip aboard the Aries-8 lunar carrier.

Clavius has been sealed off due to rumors of a mysterious plague, but at a conference held for Dr. Floyd's benefit by Ralph Halvorsen, Administrator of the Southern Province (Robert Beatty), it is established that a discovery only recently made nearby at Tycho has caused the hush-up. Premature revelation of the discovery they feel could lead to

"cultural shock and social dis-orientation", hence the cover story.

Following a briefing, Floyd, Halvorsen and Dr. Robert Michael (Sean Sullivan), set out for Tycho. There, at a new excavation forty feet into the lunar surface, stands TWA-1 (Tycho Magnetic Anomaly - 1), a colorless, featureless precision slab of unknown composition and origin 4,000,000 years old. It is "the first evidence of intelligent life off the Earth" and as a cursory examination ceases, the newly-rising sun glints off the slab for the first time since it was uncovered, causing it to emit a "single very powerful radio emission." Man is truly not alone.

Seventeen months later, an atomic-powered space craft, the Discovery One, hurtles toward Jupiter. On board the craft are Captain Mission Commander, Dr. David Bowman (Keir Dullea) and Commander Dr. Frank Poole (Gary Lockwood), three hibernating members of a survey team, Doctors Hunter, Kinnell and Kormanik and an "Historically-programmed Algorithmic computer" of the 9000 series; whom one addresses as "HAL" (Douglas Rain).

"One of the latest generation of machine intelligence, HAL functions as the brain and central nervous system of the ship." He oversees all ship-board activities and the commanders oversee him.

The trip is relatively uneventful; HAL and Poole engage in a friendly chess competition; a birthday message is transmitted to Poole from Earth-side; eating, sleeping and general maintenance of the ship are the order and procedure of each "day."

HAL runs smoothly, but on occasion Bowman finds uneasiness in the personal questions put to him by the computer, especially those having to deal with doubts about the mission they are engaged in.

The journey meets with an unforeseen problem when HAL notifies Bowman and Poole of the imminent failure of their A-R-35 unit, a tiny device but necessary to lock in radio contact with Earth. Yet upon retrieving the unit, a complete instrument's check reveals no malfunction and U.S. Mission Controller (Frank Miller) informs them a duplicate computer Earthside has indicated the fault prediction to life with HAL.

HAL insists the inaccuracy "is due to human error" and suggests the unit be replaced until failure, at which time a substitute can be installed and the faulty piece examined more minutely.

Later Bowman and Poole seal themselves in one of the extra-vehicular capsules or "space pods", free from HAL's ever-probing electronic eyes and discuss the matter. They decide HAL is malfunctioning and the only recourse is to dis-mantle his higher brain functions and continue the mission under ground-based computer control.

The faulty unit is replaced via pod by Poole, but HAL, who has seen into their plans, kills him. The unwary Bowman leaves the Discovery to retrieve his ship-mate's body, aware only of an unfortunate accident, without realizing where the true danger lies.

HAL kills off the hibernating crew men and then refuses to allow Bowman re-entry to the Discovery, claiming the mission is too important to be entrusted to human hands.

Bowman forces his way aboard via an emergency air-lock in a daring move through the vacuum of space and proceeds to HAL's brain pan. Ignoring HAL's beseeching pleas, Bowman disconnects all the higher functions of his mind to prevent any further sabotage and HAL "dies".

At precisely this moment, an automatic device unveils a film made prior to departure. In it, Dr. Floyd explains the hitherto undefined goal of the Discovery. The moon slab it appears, sent a beam of radio energy in the direction of Jupiter and science wants to know what - if anything - is out there.

In Jupiter space, inside the orbit of Europa, Bowman again leaves the ship aboard a pod. Unknown

to him, another slab is circling in orbit and his presence has triggered it into operation.

From an infinitesimal point in the distance, a "Star Gate" opens and swallows Bowman and the pod.

At a speed beyond the record of time, Bowman is plunged through the birth of galaxies and into novae and across the surfaces of many worlds. He encounters what might be other conscious entities, but he cannot communicate with them.

Aged and shaken, Bowman and the pod come to rest in what appears to be a deserted but echoing period bedroom. Through the porthole, Bowman sees a human figure dressed in the spacesuit he is wearing. It is an older Bowman, who now makes a casual check about the room. As he steps into the aseptic bathroom, he hears an unusual sound coming from the room he has just left. There in the bedroom sits a man dining from a dinner cart. The man - an even older version of Bowman - detects a noise in the bathroom, but when he investigates, finds nothing. He returns to his meal and accidentally breaks a wine glass. Bending to examine the pieces, he looks up to see an ancient Bowman lying on the bed. Alone in the room, the youngest Bowman realizes his aim in supplication to the great monolith which has appeared before him, and he is transformed.

High above the fertile Earth, in the deep void of space, Bowman, a radiant fetus - a hybrid human - a "Star Child" - returns to the planet of his original birth. It marks the beginning and the initiation of a great new day.

From the very opening moments of the film it is manifest Kubrick has undertaken far far more than a tale of super-scientific gadgetry and eldritch adventure. In each scene, even down to the individual camera set-ups, he takes ancillary, economic comment upon the action while shaping it.

Nather than shape his film along more conventional lines, Kubrick has chosen to structure it in waltz-time, poco a poco, turning towards its goal (as New York Scenes Magazine put it in an otherwise derogatory review: "The medium is the message" or at least one of them). For Kubrick, the most effective movements between points constitute curves and angles, since there is seldom a straightforward camera or object movement in the film.

Just as easily as the film could be dedicated to the memory of Orion Welles in his hey-day, so too could the film be sub-titled "In Circles" with apologies to Gertrude Stein. During the course of the film each of his symbols describes a parabola - reaching its apogee and moving back to restate its original condition, but bettered for the journey. With each new detail on the screen, Kubrick pursues his personal message; to wit: man is moving away from nature towards a complete artificiality and can only be redeemed through some "divine" intervention (in the film it is his premise of life elsewhere in the universe that effects this change). Far from obscuration, everything in the film possesses lucidity, with a veritable mathematical rhythm.

The parabolic-mythic considerations proliferate. For example: Kubrick is not content to depict the "dawn of Man." He describes a much greater path by showing us the virtual birth of our world, beginning with the opening credits (behind the M.O.M. logo/ Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer presents/ a Stanley Kubrick Production/ "2001 - A Space Odyssey"), we are treated to a majestic lunar eclipse. Far from being merely attention-catching, it depicts the Earth as a dark lifeless rock, which life has not yet touched. We then follow Kubrick through a series of dissolves and subliminal sounds that chronologically age the planet. There comes the arrival of fauna: the cadence of insects first, later a cawing that might be a bird or a great reptile and last - the apes. We then see the growth of civilization as established



TOP: "Non-communication plays perhaps the single most important role in the symbology of the film." ABOVE: "The work of the special effects man deserves the highest of praise, so much so that after 12 viewings I can barely find any complaints."

by the first year of the next century in its every glory. In the last instants of the film, the Earth reappears again. Tush and beautiful, it gives no hint of being despoiled by humanity. Perhaps creation is about to take place all over.

Symbologically, man is represented by an ingenious variation on Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man" theme. The initial stage is the "mouling and puking" infant ape. The second stage takes the form of Dr. Floyd's daughter, with her "shining morning face." The lower quite obviously has no place in the 21st century, so stage three is Bowman, the soldier, fearless and undaunted. The fourth transition is Bowman upon alighting from the pod into the bedroom - definitely more mature for his adventures. Stage five finds Bowman (a cosmic "Everyman") in the "lean and slipper'd pantalons" of an elder. Stage six sees the bed-ridden ancient, "sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" - except immortality, and here is where Kubrick's perceptivity establishes itself so grandly. Instead of death being the final act "that ends this unhappy scene," it is rebirth: making the entire process one of continual regeneration, but at the same time shifting it to a higher level (for the new baby is more than human just as man is more than ape.)

Still another consideration in the film details man's loss of innocence. In the green of nature, the apes hunt their food. They reverse the strange monolith and touch it with awe and fear. Humans are considerably more blasé about their experiences. Heywood Floyd approaches the Moon slab with a scientist's detachment and he too touches it, but his touch is gross - symbolically in the opposite direction from that of the apes - and it is cheapened by the necessity for wearing the special un-natural gloves. Stated here is the basic dehuman-



ization of man in the Twenty one hundreds which is openly manifest in as even now. Aboard the Discovery I, Bowman and Poole are much too mechanical to be heroes. They move alike, they talk alike in the same technical, emotionless jargon and certainly they look alike. The older Bowman in the bedroom begins to recover his humanity and the ancient form on the bed seems almost to be reverting to anthropoidal "innocence." With the beetling brow and great skull - all he lacks is the hirsute coat. Finally, the Star Child forms from the shell of the old and returns to the innocence of the green "un-touched" Earth.

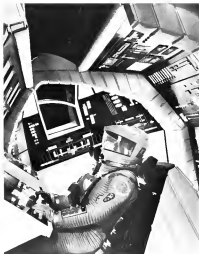
The humans are not the only characters to depict symbolic change. Machines, too, move in parabolic patterns from the initial Earth slab, to the mechanized society of the 21st century (where you can call anywhere in the world, but you have to pay instantaneously).

Encloding the mysterious alabe, HAL is the very latest word in machine intelligence and a marvelous character (to label him homosexual, though, is witch-hunting), but cyberneticists at some point programmed too much, for HAL's thought processes are dangerously human and therefore fallible (in all its implications). So human, in fact, that we want more to side with the "warrior" of HAL in a grotesque hilarious/nathetic scene. His own song moves us back to days of pre-urbanization and pre-industrialization to a time of carriages and bicycles-built-for-two. It's all part of the reactionary process and it was a succinct move on Kubrick's part to use that particular song.

The last we see of "machine intelligence" is in the form of the fourth slab - which may or may not be a machine depending upon personal interpretation.

Non-communication plays perhaps the single most important role in the symbology of the film and compared to "2001," Antonioni's exercises look reminiscent of a Yale bull session.

Initially, we find stated a basic suspicion of ape toward ape, and later of man toward man (as delineated in the conversation aboard Space Station Five). Non-communication reaches a humorous plateau when Dr. Floyd, who must be checked through security before he can move freely about the space station, speaks the necessary information to "voice-print identification." At the end of this, the recorded video tape says "Thank you. You are cleared through voice-print identification and Floyd responds "Well, thank you". It is all extremely funny. Later, we find men literally conversing with their machines unaware that they are already actual prisoners within a machine. When suspicions again surface, the verdict is death to men via machines; no defense, just death. When Bowman goes after Poole's body, it isn't out of concern for this ship-mate, after all he is dead, and they never understood each other or would have considered trying to. It is because duty impels him to find out what went wrong with the suit and the pod to prevent it from happening again. When Bowman finally evasions the sensory bedroom of his unconscious, he begins to communicate again; to see, hear and feel things which he'd never before been aware of or had forgotten existed. It is a vaulting hope and one that sees fulfillment when the Star Child



ABOVE: "Kubrick plays the old Chinese game of seeing the essence of what is hidden within many layers." LEFT: "I don't know I could single out any one effect as my favorite. Perhaps the arrival at Space Station V."

is created. The back-to-nature process is complete.

Foods have a more consistent role in the film than might be supposed. The consideration begins with the apes and their roots and berries. This is quite a part of nature until they advance to blood foods in an explicit gustatory scene.

Aboard the Aries-B, Floyd is served a Seabrook Farms "liqui-pak" dinner - palped versions of organic foods. On the bus to Tycho, there is little doubt the food is synthetic, and it is made the butt of several jokes reductio ad absurdum the basic lack of variety and/or interest. It is eaten as nourishment, never relish such as with the apes. The meals on board the Discovery are also totally synthetic. They look drab, probably taste that way and offer no excitement. The last we see of these "treats" is the birthday cake; "sorry-you-can't-be-here-to-enjoy-it." Imagine the love behind the idea of a birthday cake beamed a hundred million miles. The final (last) supper at the dinner cart returns to the wholeness of real food. (You can see carrots and new potatoes at least, and that's a start. I also have the feeling Kubrick may very possibly be a vegetarian himself.)

Religion is seductively lapsed. "Moonwatcher" derives his name from the fidelity in his study, of our satellite. His entire tribe later worships the slab. By the arrival of the twenty first century, man has refined his religious beliefs for now it is a smooth, almost sexually stimulating technocracy he pays homage to. Even Floyd's daughter is asked what she wants for her birthday, replies with innocence "a telephone." On board the deep space vessel, Poole's mother concludes her birthday wishes with a fervent "God bless." HAL as "God" - consumes an imprudent and unconscious morality play when he takes it upon himself to deny life to Poole and to destroy the hibernating crewmen. Thus attenuated, Kubrick eventually dilutes the

entire concept of "organized religion" in the sequence where the Discovery approaches Jupiter. The moonlike orbits through space. The moons of Jupiter enter into alignment with the planet in a vertical path. The slab intersects this line momentarily, forming a crucifix - that most popular and contemporary of religious symbols. The light reflected from the side of the slab is suddenly cut off as it moves on and the vision is shown to be nothing more than that, a fantasy, a figment of the imagination.

The physiological movements of "2001" also follow a pattern from the "naturalness" of the beginnings of man into complex stages of artificiality and the complete annihilation of the next century. Natural life as depicted by the apes before the arrival of the slab needs no clothing, but twenty-first century man is compelled by his adventuresomeness to shield his hide. Gravity should be sufficient to keep man on the ground, yet during the Orion shuttle flight, we are entertained by the sight of a stewardess walking up walls with assistance from her "Velcro-grip" pads and stripping on the surface of the ship. Man was meant to live in the sun, yet Poole is forced to rely upon infra red to derive his color and health. His exercise, an aspect of life ancient man never had to contend with, is hindered to a point where he looks like a squirrel treading a mill. Un-natural death follows this, and even more un-natural movements through space and time, with Bowman's "end" being only an intermediary step to the ultimate return to naturalness, in this instance depicted by the fertile look of the green Earth beneath him.

Another aspect of living is fleshed by the five symbolic birthdays in the film: the birth of our world; the inchoate dawn of man; the birthday telephone conversation with Floyd's daughter; Poole's birthday message from his parents on Earth; and finally man's rebirth in the person of Bowman.

Kubrick makes use of the ancient Chinese concept of life being the great ocean man swims through. In keeping with this, he shows our world to be only one of many islands. Likewise, the Discovery is a great fish, and Bowman and Poole are tiny creatures living in symbiosis with it.

If I only touch upon the myriad ironies inherent in the film, it is because the whole film is ironic and because the really definitive consideration thus far is Don Willis' excellent analysis published in the U.C.L.A. "Daily Bruin Intro."

Kubrick has always enjoyed the charm of

irony, perhaps here even more so than in *DR. STRANGE - LOVE*. Among the more specific moments of irony are the above-mentioned telephone conversation between Floyd and his daughter (with Rachel "gone to the bathroom"), and its horrific punch-line; Floyd's smugness and condescension toward his lessers; the drolery to the long-distance interview of the crew and HAL by Martin Alier, especially the capping remarks: the birthday transmission from Earth with HAL's subtle "Happy Birthday, Frank," and Poole's deadpan reply; the Shorty Powers - type communications from Mission Control; the insidious implications when HAL suffers his lobotomy, with the address of his human neuroses as painfully evident as his transparent guise. Most significant though, is HAL's ability, even in the midst of aberration, to so accurately diagnose his malady. It must take a combination of man and machine to be so thoughtlessly logical while mentally unbalanced, and when moments later HAL lapses into his second childhood (here too is a parallel between the dying HAL and the "dying" Bowman) and sings "Daisy", he crystallizes his symptoms through the lyrics of the song (perhaps "Daisy" was the name for the twin 9000 computer Earthside.) However, the most subtle and compelling irony is that the almighty slabs themselves, inculcators of wisdom at once unique, are simultaneously atypical of the very machines Kubrick cautions against. It is an unsettling internal puzzle that still has me perplexed.

Since Kubrick likes to play games, a little bit like God, as it were, the audience is treated to a cliff-hanger intermission, which, when you come to think about it, makes all other film intermissions piddling in comparison. Following the space-ocean metaphor, we have a Kubrickian game of big fish-little fish, where the great sea beast Discovery swallows and disgorges pods, which in turn appear to be gape-mouthed crabs and from which issue small red and yellow bugs. So too, does he play the old Chinese game of seeking the essence of what is hidden within many layers: man-in-pod-in-ship-in-space, et cetera. His visual trickery is sometimes augmented by sound games. During the voyage beyond "Jupiter and the Infinite," Bowman passes over many worlds, each apparently with its own sounds. When the sound track records the growl of an impending explosion, we dutifully see a terrific flash, though moments later we realize it wasn't an explosion at all, merely more "scenery." Like the bombers in *DR. STRANGE/LOVE*, we witness machines of all sorts copulating with the same satter-of-fact-dis-interest as their human counter-





parts. The bloodless deaths are perhaps the best little game. In these pre-conditioned days there is nothing emotive in showing a screen drenched in blood. Death means nothing and audiences can afford not to grieve. When Pauline Kael wrote: "Bonnie and Clyde...put the sting back into death," I think she was slightly premature, for it took a God-awful amount of collusion to do it, yet in "2001" there is almost always a hushed reaction by the audience as HAL goes about his killings: no graces or contortions, no gaping wounds or hairy death scenes, just the living becoming the dead as indicated by flashing lights and warning sounds and the observation of control charts (and in another sense, it's all quite funny).

Rubric has chosen to make the numeral three the basic integer for the film. In considering the classical implications, John Allen's thoughtful critique in the Sunday Times (May 19), details these subliminal examples: three primary colors in Rubric's palette; Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra," with its three-note introductory theme, and triple repetitions of it and much of the other music; the continual juxtaposition of three objects (ie: Earth-Moon-Sun, Earth-Sun-vehicle, man-pod-ship, shuttle-station-Earth, Jupiter-Discovery-pod, Bowman-Poole-HAL.)

The performances in "2001" are not in the least uncharacteristic, admitting Rubric has almost solely negative comments to make about men and mankind, and makes most of them at the initial expense of his cast. Keir Dullea and Gary Lockwood in particular must be credited with handling themselves so well under Rubric's manipulations. Physically, their general shape was a specific reason for their being chosen, and further, the consideration of what they represent and project: Americans of the corn-fed, robust ilk, such as are needed to make this country what it is today and what it will be in the next century -- to wit, men of a healthy stability sans angst. However Rubric wasn't satisfied to let the similarity remain there. He had Dullea's hair darkened and streaked and shaved his eyebrows. Lockwood's hair is parted on the opposite side. The effect is not quite evident until the scene in the pod (see photo). The two actors bend toward one another like convergent facets of the same character and the mirror image is a marvel to behold, doing much to certify them (or 'him' - the single molded Space Man) paradigm.

Dullea's role is the longer of the two starring roles and in this consideration it is unusual to note he is not seen to speak (outside of the television interview) until over an hour into the film, and he stops speaking altogether almost a half an hour before the film ends. Lockwood has the unenviable task of having to conduct several scenes suspended upside down thirty feet in the air. In its own way, this was a very rugged film on its stars.

The other members of the cast of over a hundred performers all acquit themselves in a like manner, with special praise for William Sylvester's utter insincerity, Leonard Rossiter's unctuousness and Margaret Tyzack's pacifier. Rubric's best decision was to replace the casting of Martin Balsam as the voice of HAL, with Douglas Rain. Mr. Balsam is undeniably a reliable craftsman but his voice might have obtruded by its familiarity. Mr. Rain, on the other hand, controls the same fine modulations of speech without familiarity to our ears. In the scene where Bowman asks HAL if his working up his crew psychology report, Rain's reading of the reply, "Of course," is so well done, so obsequious, yet so 'unble and precise (When you consider all that is running rampant through his mind), I

found the character totally charming for all his trepidation.

Among the many other contributors to the film, I must make note of Kubrick's own daughter who played Dr. Floyd's ingenious little girl, and Daniel Richter, who really had me believing he was "Moonwatcher." His qualities as top notch mine work.

And where did Kubrick ever find those beautifully sterile stewardesses and communications operators? They must have been real.

Upon examining the screenplay it is easy to see why Arthur C. Clarke will do few film scripts in the future - he is much too shy and gifted an artist to be appreciated. The endless Gestalt pattern of the film would have all but felled most screenwriters. Kubrick's choice of Clarke over those who work regularly with film material was an excellent thought and doubly so when you consider the place Clarke holds in contemporary literature.

The screenplay itself was adapted from the novel Clarke and Kubrick put together. Though only Clarke's name appears as the author, quite rightly the book is dedicated "To Stanley" and you can almost see those faint additional words "...without whom none of this would have been possible."

Kubrick provided the inspiration and premise which set the whole machine in operation five years ago. (If we are about to embark on the exploration of space, he asks, why shouldn't we assume other beings can also do so? And if they can, why haven't we encountered them...or have we?) It is a fair and valid premise, and one that Clarke fleshed out in fine uncluttered detail. The main addition and difference between the book and the film is Kubrick's personal embellishments. In the novel, the slabs cause a number of phenomena to occur within the apes, and actually go so far as to affect changes of color, texture and form. Some of the character names have been altered. The destination of the Discovery is made Saturn rather than Jupiter, and there on the satellite Tapetus, is the third slab, this one over a mile high (which consequently allows a much greater breach in the Star Gate.) The fabulous journey is somewhat mundane for having to be printed rather than flung at the spectator and for having to articulate precisely what is happening. Therefore you read that Bowman passes through a celestial junk yard and across a gigantic space belt. It is unfortunately literal, but Clarke may be excused.

Quite surprising is the similarity in dialogue between the two. Book dialogue can seldom be transferred to the screen (and vice versa) because most writers don't write their conversations to be spoken aloud. Here, many speeches are lifted almost in toto. Where Clarke and Kubrick most excel is in those scenes capturing the boredom of the space age and lack of communication between people in the next century while still maintaining the aura of internal uneasiness. The scene with Floyd, Elena and Maylow, I visualize as having taken weeks to polish and perfect to advance the action so imperceptibly and still be as dull as last week's news. Poole's birthday message rattles on about all manner of in-essential trivia: Bob and Sally, and Elaine and Bill, and Frank's HES-19 payments and the Accounting Office in Houston and on and on, endlessly until neither we nor Frank could care less, if we ever did.

I recommend the book to anyone who cannot immediately grasp the diverse elements of the film in their proper perspective. It will go a long way toward improving comprehension and, as literature, the book is crisp, economic and selective in detail and as absorbing and honed as we have come to expect from Mr. Clarke.

There may seem to be a certain tautology about this, but having thus separated the film into categories, I now want to discuss the technical aspects. Pardon me if I seal because that of the minimalist.

As we all know, "2001" took five years of many peoples lives to bring to the screen as well as some \$10,000,000. Kubrick not only conceived the film, produced and directed it, he also designed and supervised all the special effects. Several of his innovations and processes which reduce otherwise costly and time-consuming lab work are now being patented by M.G.M.

The settings used in the film were the work of a production crew headed by Tony Masters, Harry Lange and Ernie Archer, with art direction by John Moosli. When you stop to consider not only the main sets but also the detailing of all the inserts, theirs is a most apposite contribution. The conception of Space Station Five improves upon any yet seen by film audiences with its starkly functional simplicity and Mondrian atmosphere.

Each detail of the film is handled with such slant that in the opening sequence there are none of the anachronisms which usually war such undertakings (see, for example, any film dealing with pre-history.) The contra-terrene landscape is all igneous intrusions and low shrubs. Even the moon's position is proportionately closer than it is today. The symbolic use of green in color palette at the beginning and end of the film is well-integrated and without slip-ups. The use of tape is nothing less than inspired.

The props designed for the film are infinitely intriguing in their own as miniatures. Every space suit, costume, object and "gimmick" that is shown on the screen was designed for the film (for instance, Floyd's fountain pen, his briefcase, the television commercials, glasses and china, periodicals, cameras, maps, charts, diagrams, projected formulas, utensils and all manner of devices and gear.)

Of the more than 50 corporations consulted for scientific accuracy in the film - the Hilton Hotel chain, R.C.A.-Whirlpool, Bell Systems, Howard Johnson, Inc., IBM, Pan-American Airways (won't they have to change their name?) and Sea-Brook Farms Foods - are most evident in the film. Perhaps the finest single contribution along these lines was made by the Armstrong-Vickers Engineering Group which constructed the delicious centrifuge that comprises the Discovery's living quarters.

Costuming, through the keen eyes of Harry Aimes, projects fashions 33 years hence. It is not surprising that most of what is worn then is basically the same as today's clothing. (Floyd's daughter wears a hybrid men-suit; the men still opt for "conservative" business suits, finally getting away from the straitjackets of neck-ties; the ladies wear pantsuit outfits for the most part, and rather little in the way of jewelry.)

Even such minute von Stroheimesque elements as make-up and hair styles are considered. The female is somewhat more heavily made up for her work, as typified by the stewardesses (note also her fingernails); casual moments, as viewed in the television commercial, seem to indicate much the same. Hair remains fixed at a relatively short length for both sexes.

The specially-designed make-up for the apes and Dullea as he ages was a newly-developed process involving the use of refined seaweed and a mixture of 15 chemicals. It was perfected by Stuart Freedborn, who created those marvelous faces - Commander Mandrake, President Rifles and the unholy doctor - in DR. STRANGELOVE, with the assistance of a Japanese firm, who also used it for the "wanks" of the hibernating astronauts.

Frederick I. Ordway III and Harry Lange



"The props designed for the film are infinitely intriguing in their own as miniature. Every space suit, costume, object and "gimmick" that is shown on the screen was designed for the film."

acted as technical and scientific consultants, and it is obvious they earned their keep.

The camera work, at times in the most confined of quarters ranks the finest of its type and is doubtlessly the best work in the career of British cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth. It is arguable that he would never have reached this height without Kubrick's aegis (himself a photographer of some standing.) In the past, Unsworth has demonstrated competent, even praiseworthy work, but never comparable to that of a Tisse, a Garces, a Tourneau or a Howe. With this film, Unsworth could easily win an award or two - as could everyone connected with the action picture.

John Alcott was responsible for photographing the opening sequence. He beautifully captures the muted greens and yellows and his represents the finest sound stage approximation of outdoor lighting I have ever encountered. The sequence, by the way, was filmed only early this year and instinct tells me 20th century fox rushed to get PLANET OF THE APES into release before "2001" premiered because they had cribbed ideas from Kubrick. It doesn't matter really. In comparison, APES looks as simple as it really is.

Between the work of these two men we experience a wholly credible sensation approximating space travel - a paradoxical absence of "up" and "down" that reduced conceptions and pre-conceptions of movement to vertiginous gropings.

As for that single most concerning aspect of the entire film - special effects - Kubrick demanded and got work that constitutes an unparalleled boost in this area of "movie magic" and is at the same time infinitely more complex than anything ever before attempted and immeasurably more successful. Though Kubrick was at first loathe to discuss how he accomplished his feats, he has since relented. A recent issue of American Cinematographer magazine devotes virtually its entire contents to a detailed discussion of the problems posed by the film and their solutions.

Beneath the legend "All Special Effects Designed and Directed by Mr. Kubrick," come the names of the effects supervisors: Wally Pfister, Douglas Trumbull, Con Pederson and Tom Howard. They were flanked by a unit consisting of Colin J. Cantwell, Bryan Loftus, Frederick Martin, Bruce Logan, David Osborne, John Jack Malick and nameless others. Their work deserves the highest of praise, so much so that after 12 viewings, I can find barely any complaint. True, there are faults, yet the successful portions incalculably outweigh those of any other film and it is nagging and petty to chastise them for minor failures.

I don't know I could single out any one special effect as my favorite. It seems rather silly in light of all there is to savour, though perhaps I might choose the over-all handling of perspectives and shifting of perspectives within scenes; perhaps the arrival at Space Station Five



or those impossibly beautiful sequences involving free-fall both in space and HAL's brain centre: most likely all of it.

I bow my head in homage to all those mentioned above, and also to those who missed mention. They are a credit to the industry and deserve our gratitude and praise.

Among the many questions people have about the film there are three or four which re-occur constantly. What, for instance, is the meaning of the broken wine glass? Well, from one point of view, this seems to be the first moment Bowman is actually aware all this is happening to him. Until that instant, he had been thrust along by the flow of events, and this sight and sound were the first to break through and reach him on a conscious level. From another point of view, this could be a further extension of the life-line parabola and would probably derive from that archaic French custom of returning a drop of wine from each bottle or glass to the earth that had brought it forth - in essence to continue the growth process. If anyone has other ideas, I will gladly entertain them.

A second question is why does the fourth convocation with the monolithic form seem to be much more powerful than the three previous instances? My answer to this is specifically a matter of audience and directorial perspective. In the opening sequence, the apes are the primary concern, therefore the slab is not personalized for us. Later, Floyd, Michaels, Halvorson and the others study the Moon slab. We are drawn along by the hand-held camera. The third time the slab appears, it is doubtful anyone in the film is aware of its presence. Its "being" is all that is required. However in the fourth encounter, Bowman lies dying on the bed. He raises his arm in acceptance of the mysterious form and his vision is replaced by the camera. We are facing the slab for the first time and it fills the screen. Like Bowman, we are vicariously transformed, accepting the object for whatever we ourselves want it to be. Here is the most powerful moment in the film and one apparently even reaching those people who deny the film's power. It raises hackles quite unlike any other film experience.

What the slabs are themselves is a question which cannot be answered with anything approaching finality. If it's avoiding the issue, forgive me, but the ultimate answer lies in each viewer. If a theory works for you, whatever strength or loose ends it has, fine. It works and that is what matters.

I have questions of my own. Despite the fact they are complete trivia: why does the film bear credits for both Metrocolor and Technicolor? Realizing the same facilities might not have been available when the latter scenes were filmed, Metrocolor is still Eastmancolor stock, and Technicolor works from its own. Was Mr. Kubrick experimenting with different process effects for separate portions of the film or was the other lab simply used for second unit work?

I hesitate also to stir in this next consideration, insofar as most are concerned. It deals with the original version of the film.

I saw "2001" once before it was cut to its current length and I would like to assure you only the most Puritanical film-goer would bridle at the cuts or call truncated the version Mr. Kubrick himself has authorized.

In shortening the film by 19 minutes and some seconds, he quickly admits no complete scene was excised, only portions and snip-pets. For your benefit let me briefly note then: several short scenes with the apes and their babies; a cut in the build-up of Moonwatcher's triumphal return to the watering place (the only rough edge in Mr. Townjoy's work); several short shots of the Discovery in flight; the end of the scene in which Bowman and Poole are notified Mission Control considers their computer to be in error (they have HAL re-play the message); a long tracking shot immediately after HAL has killed the three hibernating crewmen and Poole, which duplicated the movements to Poole as he exercised (this is the only cut I would like re-inserted. It added an extra note of irony and didn't increase the

length of the film by that much); HAL telling Bowman communication with Earth has been temporarily cut off (later picked up and intended to mean something else when Bowman asks HAL if radio contact has been established yet - with Poole - and if he knows what the trouble is); and lastly, a short scene in the bedroom where Bowman discovers a dressing gown and slippers inexplicably on the bed. These can still be discerned in the background when the astronaut goes to look in the bathroom. These cuts, the addition of the subtitles: "In Deep Space, 17 Months Later," "Jupiter - and Beyond the Infinite," and an insert of the slab when Moonwatcher first comprehends the use of the bone, are the only concessions Kubrick made to critics and audiences.

In other cities - those designated as initial premiere cities - there is some minor difference in these alterations. In Houston, for example, some of the visuals are slightly scrambled; there are not any sub-titles and the insert of the slab is missing. Some of these peculiarities in any way hurt the validity of the film.

The sound track from the motion picture is one of those unfortunate accidents: Jesse Kaye and the M.G.M. Studio sound department, who prepared the music for commercial distribution, had best re-learn their business. The recording is execrable. Somewhere between the master print

"Dallies and Lockwood in particular must be credited with handling themselves well under Kubrick's manipulations. Physically, their general shape was a specific reason for their being chosen. However, Kubrick wasn't satisfied to let the similarity end there."





"The monolith orbits through space. The moons of Jupiter enter into alignment with the planet in a vertical path. The slab intersects the line momentarily, forming a cruciform--that most popular and contemporary of religious symbols."

sound tracks and the album, the delicacy and strength of the selections were filtered away.

Taking into account past work from M.G.M. Records, this sort of slipshod work could be expected. Over-attention is the primary fault because the record division has far too many projects to give adequate consideration to any one of them, but it does not excuse this specific example of sloppy craftsmanship.

The opening band from "Zarathustra," for example, lacks any modulation. There is no definition in it or the "Lux Aeterna" piece. The 10 minute and 25 second rendering of "The Blue Danube" is arbitrarily spaced out on two bands beginning on one side and concluding just before the end of the second side.

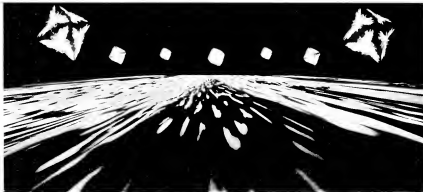
The accompanying notations are poorly conceived. Even the execution of the album artwork leaves something to be desired. The front and back covers

depict "artist's conceptions" of the film (this is the material from the original publicity campaign which went by the boards once the film opened).

It was found to be mis-leading and a substitute of Keir Dullea in his helmet was prepared) and the centerfold, though it contains eight fine color transparencies from the film include two which have been "flipped," two that are posed publicity shots and another wherein the scene has been re-produced on its side. One wonders why they tried.

Perhaps all this is nit-picking, but truly the album is for: (1) the indiscriminatory; (2) those people who must collect all filmastic; (3) those people - myself included - who have collections of material on the film, or (4) and this is probably the widest category, those people who would be ignorant of such of the music selected for the film if it were not for this recording. If you don't number yourself here, please save your money.

"At a speed beyond the record of time, Bowman is plunged through the birth of galaxies and into noxae and across the surfaces of many worlds."



Initial trade paper reception of "2001" was favorable, though there is indication the samoth production cowed even the hardest reviewer into sublimating his puzzlement beneath a welter of laudatory adjectives.

The film premiere in Washington on April 1st was an almost unqualified success. The critics garnered Kubrick and the film and gave every indication of understanding the metaphysics of "2001". Two days later in New York City the opposite held true.

The morning following the premiere, the comments read like a character assassination. Kathleen Carroll in the New York Daily News called the film a way out experience, whatever that means, yet was totally mystified and wasted the production with only two and a half stars -- out of a potential four. It prompted one wag to inquire why, out of all the stars visible in the film could he only find about two? Archer Winston in the Post admitted complete bafflement at the exercise and closed his review with a remark about Kubrick stubbing his toe. Miss Annata Adler was most humorous in her Times review, which found the film "the apotheosis of the fantasy of an early nineteen fifties city boy." She thought the slabs looked like so many coffin lids or candy bars and remarked that the end was rather on the order of a Schreber, "with murky implications of theology." No one should be disallowed his opinion, however Miss Adler ignores the most basic rules of journalism, postulating like all get out and finally lapsing into incoherency.

The weekly news magazines were only barely more encouraging. After a great color spread in Life magazine (April 5), Time found the film "over-long...repetitious...embusbed...and ignorant of such old fashioned elements as character and conflict" (sic). However, as is their wont, the current comment in their recommended viewing section reads: "Director Stanley Kubrick deploys all the dazzling devices of the space age in this cosmic parable of the history and the future of man." (July 19). Moreover, it is still listed at the top of their chart. Joseph Morgenstern, in Newsweek (April 15) considered the film "sporadic...whimsical...annoying...a crashing bore...wholly inadequate... (and) a trap."

Despite those estimable publications branding the film anathema, other voices have made themselves heard. Penelope Gilliat in the New Yorker (April 13) called it "some sort of great film and an unforgettable endeavor." Wilfred Sheed in Esquire for July had reservations but in all considered it to be "haunting".

For our own delectation, Carlos Clarens hated the film. After being given the planets, he argues, the next logical step for the spectator is out into the stars. This basic failure on the part of "2001" is virtually a cop-out.

To him, it would have been far more fascinating and satisfying to observe a \$10,000,000 gold block in an otherwise empty room than suffer the film. His meaning ~~does~~ come across. He expected a great deal more from the special effects and called Kubrick a directorial failure, though Mr. Clarens did praise the "Dawn of Man" episode.

Clarens alligns himself, often as not, with the Auteurist school of criticism (Andrew Sarris, Prop.). It has always seemed to me here was great perception and selectivity negated by entirely arbitrary decisions: this director makes it; that director fails. Accordingly Kubrick is classified as a "minor disappointment." His setter, Sarris wrote in his lengthy article, "The American Cinema", which appeared in the Spring 1963 issue of Film Culture, "is projects rather than film, publicite rather than cinema. He say wind up as

the director of the best coming attractions in the industry... his career is at a standstill of his own devising." And concludes with, "What doth it avail a director if a project be pre-sold to the whole world and he loseth his soul?"

Barris' Village Voice review (April 11) of the film got off a singularly nasty slap calling it "merely a pretext for a pictorial spread in Life magazine."

Barris is beyond my ken. Mr. Clarens often confounds me with his odd processes of extrapolation, but as he himself admitted smilingly "Of course, I may change my mind tomorrow."

Around the country more local premieres have responded with favorable reviews, killing the idea that if New York didn't like a film it was dead. Anyway, why should any critic make or break any film?

As of the moment, clubs and cults have sprung up unassisted, bent on perpetuating "2001." There are buttons for the film proclaiming "The Ultimate Trip," and HAL's "I know I've made some rather poor decisions lately, but it's all right now." Schools and colleges have clasped the film to their collective bosoms, and willingly argue its merits at the hint of a sneer. There are posters of the art work, and someone recently began the work on a series of posters from the film itself. In the August issue of Seventeen magazine there is an advertising section which lists films doing tie-ins on the film. Among them are JP's (a division of Puritan Fashions corp.), Wells Jewelry, which did a two-page advertisement showing the Jupiter slab and its latest creations, and John Zeman (a sportswear company). There are expected to be further merchandising tie-ins in the near future.

Even the response from what might be considered the frivolous and immature factions in the entertainment world indicate the film is a favorite of theirs also. Among the ophion makers, the trade publication Variety records: John Lennon "sees the film every week," and producer-director Franco Zeffirelli wrote "You (Hubrick) made me dream eyes wide open. Yours is much more than an extraordinary film."

Mike Nichols, Henry Fonda, Paul Newman,

Joanna Woodward, Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, John Schlesinger, Richard Lester and Stanley Donen are among those flocking to the defense of the film.

Around the country and in the foreign situations where "2001" has opened - Japan, Canada, Australia and Great Britain - similar throngs are filling theatres and racking up big box-office receipts. In Brazil, where the film recently opened, "2001" recorded the highest opening day grosses as well as the biggest opening day attendance in the history of the entire country for any film. As for the United States, according to Lee Beaupre, a Variety reporter in the July 31 weekly issue: "After the first press previews, at which critics and industryites were notably restless, most M.G.M. execs glumly predicted trouble for the \$10,000,000 roadshow. Thus far the 'disaster' has grossed \$6,147,688 in 63 reserved-seat engagements, one-third of which have played only four weeks and another third, less than two months." "2001" is the biggest road-show in M.G.M. history, and the top-rated box office attraction in the entire country.

Where will it all end in anyone's guess. In many foreign-speaking countries, especially those where technology has not developed to what it is here, I fear the film will suffer set-backs from sheer mystification at all its symbolism and analogous content. Even in this country, the film has yet to reach a truly wide audience.

What Hubrick's feelings are is also anyone's guess. It is questionable whether his hopes for the film ever reached quite this peak. He is currently in Britain preparing his next film production, a biography of Napoleon. He believes his screenplay will illuminate aspects of the General's life that have not been public knowledge. It will also, in his words, "blow minds."

My position is clear. I find the film a classic par excellence. As long as the film is available, I shall continue to study it, and to be amazed by it and its creator. Who knows, perhaps it will still be playing when the next century arrives. Fanciful perhaps, yet I hope so.

-David MacDonald-

(continued from page 21)

her, the affliction is explained by Bramwell Fletcher at the finale as a form of mania that occurred in only the men of the family, passed on from father to son through the ages, and blossomed only when the victim was out on a frosty night. Unlike the other movie werewolves, Oliver was never aware of his affliction and thought he was being treated for a nervous disorder. Of particular interest was the dialogue in which he subtly revealed indications of his schizophrenia:

"Suddenly, I felt something coming at us from all sides! Then it closed in on me, like a blast from a furnace, only it wasn't hot, it was...it was simply horrible! Kate screamed, and I was fighting it....fighting it in a darkness that went all red....all dark red....till a splash of fire split it up and put it out! I awoke in the light and saw Helga..."

The "splash of fire" referred to the moment that he pitched on his head after killing Kate, reviving later on in the light of his sister's lantern. Kraus foreshadowed the nature of the beast in various parts of the film, as in the encounter with the dog-like statue in the crypt, and in Oliver's references to awakening in the light.

Contributing greatly to the chills was the score by Neil Newman, with additional music by David Maksin. Dominating the ominous scenes was

an utterly eerie six-note leitmotif on the flute and underscored by the ghostly wail of distant female voices. This theme made its debut under the title credits with full orchestra, and was repeated throughout the film in interesting variations. More prevalent were shocking atonal organ passages that grew in intensity until it cut to the next scene. When the monster jumps from the balcony, he is accompanied by a blast of trombones, and when Gus enters the doctor's lab and starts up a centrifuge, the leitmotif is heard over a tingling cacophony on the celesta. Newman's score was particularly effective in this horror film in contrast to those done at Universal, where musical director M. J. Salter mostly manipulated a stock score in film after film. Newman's musical direction remains as a brilliant and vital element, and the score can raise among Hermann's *PSYCHO* and *Twin Peaks* the *THE THING* in terms of effectiveness.

THE UNDYING MONSTER was not by any means the definitive werewolf tale, nor does it profess to be anything but a supernatural murder-mystery. It was unfortunately cocooned by the sensationalism of Lawrence Turbot of *Llewellyn*, Universal's own "Undying monster" who illogically turned up in the studio's enterprising but nevertheless preposterous potpourri of monster marathons until he found a degrading demise (ironically with Lugosi as Dracula) in an Abbott & Costello free-for-all. Kraus' film should be recognized as possibly the eeriest horror-whodunit of the forties.

FOLMAN
LOOKSAT

WAR of the WORLDS

...FROM THE OTHER SIDE

OKAY,
REMEMBER—
ONCE WE'VE SCOUTED
THE LANDING SITES,
WE CALL OUR
REPORT BACK.
THEN JOIN THE
INVASION FLEET
AS IT LANDS.
—AND IF
ANYBODY
STOPS US,
LET ME DO
THE TALKING!



... PREPARED WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK,
TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS

George Pal ~ producer

Paramount Studios, for this 1952 release,

Byron Haskin ~ director

Burt Lyndon ~ screenwriter

George Barnes, A.C.C. ~ camera

ALL RIGHT, EARTHLING!
I'M GONNA LET YOU HAVE IT...
JUST AS SOON AS I CAN
...OOOF... LIFT MY GRUNT...
STINKING RAY GUN
...ARSH... UNDER YOUR
BLASTED ...OOG...
EARTH GRAVITY...

BY

© 1997 BY THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE



The Talents

Sir Cedric Hardwicke
Gene Barry
Ann Robinson
and their supporting cast.
With especial regard to the
Arizona National Guard
for accepting a role that
required them to take a dive.

The Artists and Designers

Charles Bonesteel
Illustrator of the Show, Panels and Credits
Hal Pereira
Supervising Art Director
Albert Moxley
Art Director
Designer of the Motion Machines
Charles Gwosdz
who built and operated
the Machine
... I hope I drew him right
Mr. Gwosdz

The Specialists

the late Gordon Jennings
Special Effects Director
Animatronics Studio
Paul Luperon
Optical Effects
Walter Holtzman
Pentachords
Gene Garvin
Sound/Dubbing Mix

... and the many others who have earned a place on this list.



those who Aided and Assisted

Dr. Robert Richardson at the
Mount Wilson Observatory
the California Institute of
Technology

Northrop and North American
Aircraft for supplying stock
bustle of their famous
Flying Wing aircraft

to our local TV stations
for showing the film, and bringing back
many memories thereby~
(we wish them many happy returns)

...and of course

Herbert George Wells, author

for his 1894 creation
... and for a number of other entertaining
stories, games, advice, literary works, and whatnot

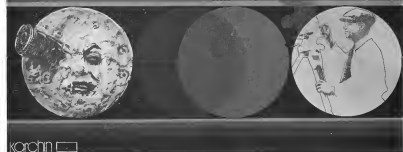
my thanks

TH

WE'RE NOT
WHIBBED
YED, EARTHLINGS.



THE AUTEUR IN SCIENCE FICTION dale winogura



Andrew Harris remains the foremost exponent of director authorship criticism in America, but who represents the directors of science fiction? Nobody as yet, and I certainly don't pretend to be the one. But somebody has to begin sometime and somewhere.

Most science fiction fans I've spoken with approach the genre mainly on a literary basis, and judge it not according to the director (whose function and purpose they're usually ignorant of), but to its writer and thus the script. What they very frequently fail to perceive is that screenplays are blueprints, and the director constructs the building. A good or even great story/script can be ruined by the blind, insensitive instincts of directors like Michael Anderson (1948) and Fred Wilcox (FORBIDDEN PLANET). There are of course so many, even too many, atrocious examples of science fiction, but such mingling of terrible material with terrible talent is often too absurd and commonplace to even bother with. The major concern of this article is with the personality of the director, both in personal and technical terms. Film is certainly a collaborative medium, but without a good leader, the director, any collective enterprise is doomed.

On the other hand, relatively ordinary material can be given an extraordinarily imaginative treatment by its maker, as with splendid talents like Richard Fleischer (FANTASTIC VOYAGE), Robert Altman (COUNTDOWN), and Howard Hawks (THE THING).

Granted, there are several examples of scripts handled with seemingly limited cinematic emphasis, operating primarily on a linear approach, as in *THINGS TO COME* (Menzies), *THE DAY THE EARTH STOPPED STILL* (Whale) and *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* (Fleischer). Yet, if one looks closely enough, there is something operating behind these films that is more than just script. There is a warmth, a passion of involvement that transcends expository and character dialog and carefully thought-out, structured scenes. All this encompasses the prime point of filmmaking--the director's personality. It involves not only the fact of an emotional shift because of cutting to a closeup at a certain point, or the director's judgement to do a medium shot instead of a closeup (and there are about 3,000 different ways of doing long shots, medium shots and closeups), but a feeling that he must communicate to everyone around him on the set, whether it by words, gestures or just plain silence.

Not all sci-fi can be personal to be good. Witness Gordon Douglas' *THEM!*, Joseph Newman's *THIS ISLAND EARTH*, Kurt Neumann's *THE FLY* and Steve Sekely's

DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, all tout, well-made genre films with feeling, purpose, meaning and excitement. These are not personal films, but films with personality. The man who made them took not a direct personal involvement, but a technical expertise and, more importantly, an understanding of the material, which was neither good, bad nor indifferent, and injected it with a certain amount of human compassion that is part of us all, and in particular with the makers of these films.

Of course, on the other end of the spectrum, are the evidently personal works, like Kubrick's 2001 and a *CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, Lang's *METROPOLIS*, Siegel's *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, and Sussan's *DEADLY INVENTION*. These are films, generally speaking masterpieces, that exude a pulsating, rhythmical personality that is more than technical dexterity and feeling. Their styles are pointed and geared to express feelings and emotions at once foreign and completely recognizable, and bring out its maker's personal and filmic mind together, and almost nakedly. There are thoughts expressed in their styles not conveyed by action or dialog, but by the elementary tools of camera, editor and even actors; they express a gut-level orientation to the material that practically cancels out the idiotic theory of the "director-proof" screenplay. There is no such thing as a "director-proof" script. Maybe in TV there is, but not in films, especially in most of the truly important sci-fi films.

What is the distinction between science fiction and other similar genres, like fantasy and horror? For me, anyway, it represents in certain levels and degrees, a direct or indirect involvement obviously in science. To my way of thinking, it rules out films like *KING KONG*, *THE BIRDS*, *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*, *FARENHEIT 451* and the original *LOST WORLD*, all more preoccupied with adventure, allegory or psychology than science. Almost any and all films of the supernatural (*THE PROUD THE INNOCENTS* or *THE HAUNTING*) are also not involved. Sci-fi science is certainly involved, one way or another, in these films, but I find it all arbitrary, academic and pointless to wallow in discussing such obviously ambiguous distinctions. Besides, I must narrow down genres somehow, or else this article would become a book. God forbid.

Along the lines of Harris' article in *Film Culture* and his book *The American Cinema*, follows my summary of directors in science fiction, their films in the genre, and my evaluation of them. They are listed in four categories, in alphabetical order of last names.

FIRST LINE

These are directors with one or more extraordinary and significant film in the genre; generally speaking, masterworks of their class, recognized or not.


ROBERT ALTMAN [1969--*COUNTDOWN*]

Altman's first theatrical feature was as financially disastrous as it was unsurprisingly intelligent and provocative in outer space film. As it was in his later work, character is Altman's thing, and their devotion to something at once glorious and insane that leads them to triumph or tragedy, or both. But *COUNTDOWN* remains one of the great unseen films and a rare, compelling study of the men who must sacrifice everything to advance mankind another step.


RICHARD FLEISCHER [1960--*20,000 LEAGONS UNDER THE SEA*, 1966--*FANTASTIC VOYAGE*, 1973--*SOLARIS* GREEN]

Arguably, two of the most exquisite contrasts in science fiction, with literary grandeur on the one hand (*LEAGUES*) and visual grandeur on the other (*VOYAGE*). In both cases, Fleischer's versatility and assuredness is strongly present and, if one looks beneath the surface gimmickery, there are strong methods in his madness. His *SOLARIS* GREEN marks a big step forward in the matter-of-fact treatment of sci-fi, and its blending with genre conventions.

HOWARD HAWKS [1951--*THE THING*]

No one can persuade me that Christian Nyby was the key figure behind *THE THING*. The masterful blending of spontaneous dialog and austere tension in the style is pure Hawks. If one would take the time to see other Hawks and Nyby films, there would be no question as to who the real auteur is.

STANLEY KUBRICK [1968--*2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*, 1971--*A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*]

From 2001 to *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, Kubrick has gracefully leaped from grandiose philosophical allegory to earthy sociological parable. These films comprise two of the most sublime masterpieces in science fiction, visual breakthroughs in genre expression and foresight.


FRITZ LANG [1926--*METROPOLIS*, 1928--*GIRL IN THE MOON*]

Though *GIRL IN THE MOON* is flat, tedious adventure, nothing but nothing can save *METROPOLIS* as one of the great potpourris of sci-fi, melodrama, suspense, action, terror and wonder of all time.

WILLIAM CAMERON MENZIES [1930--*THINGS TO COME*, 1935--*INVASION FROM MARS*, 1938--*THE MARS*]

THINGS TO COME is still the greatest, the most definitive H. G. Wells filmization, with the epic flavor and thematic intelligence so many similar achievements miss. His later films, especially *INVASION FROM MARS*, were crude, yet truly bizarre, nightmarish experiences of style in relation to setting.


DON SIEGEL [1956--*INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*]

Deceptively simple, slyly treacherous, and still one of the most emotionally and intellectually gripping of all sci-fi films, *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* would fulfill any director's canon. It remains one of the great, singular exceptions to the so-called "B" science fiction movie.

ROBERT WISE [1951--*THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, 1971--*THE ANNOYED GRIN*]



The warm emotionalism and charm of *Mise's* classic, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, gave way to the cold intellectual suspense of *THE ANKROMEDA STRAIN* 20 years later. But no matter, these are two of the most distinguished and intelligent films of their kind, especially the former.

KAREL ZEMAN [1955--*THE DEADLY INVENTION OF THE FABLES OF JULES VERNE*]

Czech animation has always been richly imaginative, and Karel Zeman used it at the peak of wit and charm, and the least in pretension. Outside of 20,000 LEAGUES, no one else has so fully captured the flavor of Verne.

SECOND LINE

One or more fine achievements, not really significant, with numerous lesser films.



JACK ARNOLD [1953--*IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE*, 1954--*CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON*, 1955--*TARANTULA*, REVENGE OF THE CREATURE, 1967--*THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*, 1957--*MONSTER ON THE CAMPUS*, *THE SPACE CHILDREN*]

Contrary to John Baxter, the desert is not Jack Arnold's theme; it is his stage. Without a fully developed central protagonist, Arnold lost himself in the impersonal, adventurous mishaps of *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE*, the *CREATURE* films, and *TARANTULA*. *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN* is undoubtedly his best film because of the strong focus on its ill-fated hero. Even the silliness of *MONSTER ON THE CAMPUS* had its moments of sanity and compassion in light of Arthur Franz's character.



ROY WARD BAKER [1967--*FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH*]

In spite of some trashy, vaguely styled horror films, Baker's *FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH* is still the best of the Quatermass films, wildly original and quite scary in bits.

MARIO BAVA [1968--*PLANES OF THE VAMPIRES*, 1967--*DANGER: DIABOLIK*]

Style is all with Bava, and his strikingly, dreadfully visual *PLANES OF THE VAMPIRES* and frightfully comic-book nonsense of *DIABOLIK* give strong evidence that the man is serious about his work, and loves it.

GORDON DOUGLAS [1966--*THREE!*]

Still the best of the giant bug movies, *THREE!* remains thoroughly serious and suspenseful because it was done straight, vigorously and with taste.

VAL GUEST [1950--*THE CREEPING UNKNOWN*, 1957--*ENEMY FROM SPACE*, 1961--*THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE*]

How to make something out of nothing is the lesson learned from Val Guest's two Quatermass films, beautifully stylized though vastly imperfect. Rarely was black-and-white used as effectively and as meaningfully as in *CREEPING UNKNOWN* and *ENEMY FROM SPACE*, and that alone justifies Guest as a noteworthy filmmaker.



GEORGE LUCAS (1971--*THX 1138*)

Lucas' perverse usage of experimental cinema is absolutely unparalleled in science fiction, though often uneven and capricious. This is the superb beginning of this man's unique, undeniably personal vision, and one hopes he will flourish in the future.



KURT NEUMANN (1950--*ROCKETS IN THE SKY*, 1947--*THE DEVIL, KNOWS*, 1958--*THE FLY*)

Neumann's remarkable and thoughtful *THE FLY* was the exception to a generally mediocre filmography, although *KNOWS* was blessed with some astounding technical effects.

JOSEPH M. NEWMAN (1948--*THIS ISLAND EARTH*)

Though not as pulpy, poetic or political as Raymond Dugnat made it out to be, *THIS ISLAND EARTH* is one of the few intelligently guided and persuasive interplanetary epics ever, as well as one of the most colorful.



GEORGE PAL (1960--*THE TIME MACHINE*)

Producer of several important sci-fi films, *THE TIME MACHINE* is the only one he directed, and it's superior to any of the others, not counting the fantasy films (*BROTHERS GRIMM* and *DR. LEO*). No other director of his could capture the consistency of simple charm, warmth, naivete and wonder of Pal's personality, and *THE TIME MACHINE* is ample proof of this.

WOLF KILLA (1960--*VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED*)

Killa's chilling use of black-and-white is the perfect atmosphere for this chilling science fiction allegory. As smooth and cold as steel, with the sting of a tarantula, *VILLAGE* remains an unforgettable mood and suspense piece.

JOSEPH SARGENT (1970--*COLOSSUS: THE FORDIN PROJECT*)

Hopefully, *COLOSSUS* will not be Sargent's last word on science fiction. A compelling study of man under science's thumb, it reveals contemporary fears, insecurity and anguish with unwatched exactitude and impact.

FRANKLIN J. SCHAFFNER (1968--*PLANET OF THE APES*)

Schaffner's visual scope and precise editorial flow made *PLANET OF THE APES* one of the most emotionally profound and intellectually stimulating films of its type. Though not entirely consistent in style and personality, it's still a smoothly combined and paced blend of action and allegory.



JAMES WHALE (1931--*FRANKENSTEIN*, 1934--*THE INVISIBLE MAN*, 1935--*THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*)

Structurally crude, thematically depressed, James Whale still made the most amusing film of the Universal series, *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, perhaps the epitome of mad science melodramas.

THIRD LINE

Likeable directors, with either one or more good sci-fi films, or amiable, ambitious failures.

MICHAEL CURTIZ (1932--*DOCTOR X*)

A nice little sci-fi movie film, *DR. X* is worth mentioning for its bizarre characters and application of early 2-color Technicolor.

ROGER CORMAN (1958--*DAY THE WORLD ENDED*, *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD*, 1957--*NOT OF THIS EARTH*, *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS*, 1958--*WAR OF THE SATELLITES*, 1960--*BEAST FROM THE HAUNTED CAVE*, *THE WASP WOMAN*, 1961--*X*, *THE MAN WITH X-RAY EYES*)

Mostly negligible, fast "B" films were Corman's specialty, ranging from vulgar crudity (*WASP WOMAN*) to rapid credibility (*WAR OF THE SATELLITES*) to enter-taining crudity (*DAY THE WORLD ENDED*, *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD*). But *X* is an effective sci-fi film, at times disturbingly so, and expertly, carefully made. If there's any thematic similarity in Corman's work,



it's a determined individual trying to prove something to himself, to someone else or to the world. The only linking style is, for the most part, crudity.



BYRON HASKIN [1955--WAR OF THE WORLDS, 1956--CONQUEST OF SPACE, 1958--FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON, 1954--ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS, 1965--THE POWER]

Religious mania seems to filter into almost every one of Haskin's sci-fi films in one way or another, either subtly (WAR OF THE WORLDS, THE POWER) or basically (CONQUEST OF SPACE, FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON). His visual feeling is often assured and affecting, as are some of the emotional facets, but only ROBINSON CRUSOE is consistently, persuasively so. Outside of that exception, Haskin's career went gradually downhill in taste and facility.

GEORGE ROY HILL [1970--SLAUGHTERHOUSE-5]

Roy Hill's first and only sci-fi so far was an unusual and daring attempt at visual transcription of Vonnegut's eclectic vision, and a noteworthy one. For all its playing around with time, Hill seemed at home with it to the extent that the convolutions were extremely organic and orderly, but maybe a bit too regimental.

HATWAY JURAN [1957--20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH, THE DEADLY MANTIS, 1964--ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN, STRAIP FROM PLANET ARDUS, 1964--FIRST NEW IN THE MOON]

Juran's best work was for animator Ray Harryhausen because he pleasantly conveyed the charm and childlike sense of fantasy in science fiction and, in the case of THE VOYAGE OF SINAI, the fantasy in fantasy. The rest can charitably be forgotten.

HENRY LEVIN [1950--JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH]

Levin's charm and carefully ordered personality was just right for JOURNEY, and it stands up as one of the few truly Verne-like of Verne adaptations in its delightfully scientific nonsense and character interplay.

IRVING PICHEL [1950--DESTINATION MOON]

The spongecake lightness of science fiction adventure in DESTINATION MOON is appealingly dated, but far more substantial than many inferior, over-rated imitations. Pichel is to be commendably foot-noted for this always engaging film, superior to any other director of Pal's, but never outdistancing Pal himself.



IRVING SCHWEDSACK [1960--DR. CYCLOPS]

KING KONG, SON OF KONG and MIGHTY JOE YOUNG are modern-prehistoric fantasies, not science fiction, even though any of these is better than DR. CYCLOPS. For KING KONG alone, Schwedack, along with Merlan C. Cooper, would be a first-line filmmaker of sci-fi. But since KONG is not sci-fi, DR. CYCLOPS is just simply and ably made; entertaining, but nothing compared with the gorillas.

STEVE SEKELY [1961--DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS]

One of the few consistently frightening sci-fi films, DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS is only seriously marred with an unconvincing, ludicrous ending that almost makes nonsense out of everything that came before it. But Sekely's work is too good to be watered down by an obvious studio compromise, and his film stands up quite well in spite of it.

JOHN SHERWOOD [1967--MONOLITH MONSTERS]

More inventive and entertaining than any of Jack Arnold's impersonal, desert sci-fi adventures, but not as good as Arnold's best work, MONOLITH MONSTERS remains one of the handful of good Universal offerings. Sherwood's work is even, punctual and sparing, and one only wishes that he would have done more in the genre.

CURT STODOLAK [1963--THE MAGNETIC MONSTER]

Stodolak's work in MAGNETIC MONSTER is more interesting and efficient than all the horror and fantasy turkeys be turned out put together. It's a clever, suspenseful film, and Stodolak's only redeeming contribution to the cinema.

JACK SMIGHT [1958--THE ILLUSTRATED MAN]

Smight's attempt at dramatizing Ray Bradbury was not entirely satisfactory, but it was a thrillingly visual, often powerful view of man's self-destructive tendencies. It had the consistent tempo that was sorely lacking in Truffaut's FANFANTINE 451, but none of its occasional poetic touch.

JOHN STURGES [1970--HARMOONED]

More placid than exciting, a great deal too slow,

MARCONED still had enough of the Sturges deliberate intensity of his best work to make it an often compelling piece, despite his typical deficiencies.

DON TAYLOR [1971--ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES]

A simple, friendly warmth pervades Taylor's ape film, charming and beguiling, which seems as much a part of him as it does writer Paul Dehn.

J. LEE THOMPSON [1972--CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, 1973--BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES]

The last two ape mini-epics were perhaps the coldest of the series, and quite juvenile, but the final chapter carried a mild gentility of character under the surface which was far superior to Ted Post's contribution in *Ape #2*, and to Thompson's own *#4*. It suggests that, when at ease with his people, Thompson can emerge quite affectionately from an irascible exterior.

DOUGLAS TRUMBULL [1972--SILENT RUNNING]

A promising start, *SILENT RUNNING* is perhaps a perfect beginning for Trumbull as he begins what looks like a comprehensively personal view of science fiction and its relationship to modern man.

FOURTH LINE

Mostly worthless sci-fi film careers, possibly with a virtue or two, but not enough to salvage their impersonality and lassitude.

IRWIN ALLEN [1965--THE LOST WORLD, 1967--VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA]

If Allen wasn't so mindlessly entertaining, visually and thematically dull and blatantly pandering, he could be forgotten. But his tastes are too bizarre to be denied recognition.

MICHAEL ANDERSON [1966--1969]

1968 is so bed in the mind as a callous, insensitive rendering of one of the great literary achievements. But then, Anderson was never the right man for Orwell. Stanley Kubrick or Robert Altman could do it today, and well.

WESLEY E. BARRY [1963--CREATION OF THE MONUMENTS]

A ruggedly intellectual sci-fi and experimental filmmaking, *CREATION* is more tepid treatise than intelligent cinema, and an inferior prerequisite for Lucien's *TOM 1138*. Its stylistic similarity with Dreyer is purely coincidental, but not beyond consideration.

RICHARD CARLSON [1964--RISERS TO THE STARS]

Actor Carlson's bland, unexciting space travel film has none of the fascinating documentary flavor of J. Lee Thompson's *I AM AT THE STARS* or the charm of *DESTINATION MOON*, or the tensions of *COUNTDOWN*. A competent, amiable performer, Carlson is more at ease in front of the camera than behind it.

BERT I. GORDON [1958--THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN, 1958--ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE, 1959--THE SPIDER, MAN OF THE COLOSSAL BEAST, 1960--VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS]

Even surlier than Gorman, Gordon was the perfect AIP filmmaker. His films were as simply pointless and wandering as they were simply insane. Hopefully, R.O. Wells' brilliant *Food of the Gods* will survive *VILLAGE OF THE GIANTS* and be remade.

EUGENE LOURIE [1957--BEAST FROM 20,000 PATRONS, 1959--COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK, 1959--THE GIANT BEHEMOTH (with Doug Dickson), 1961--GORG0]

Easily Harryhausen's and O'Brien's dullest, most uninspired director, Lourie at the very least squeezed some feeling out of the otherwise inferior *COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK*.

TED POST [1970--BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES]

Though he tried very hard, the apes beat Ted Post. He obviously had little affinity for the characters or material, and it showed. Outside of a few well-executed moments, it's the weakest of the series, but it proves how important it is for a director to



care about his theme.

BORIS SAGAL [1978--THE OMEGA MAN]

Thoroughly botching Matheson's original, Sagal's messy, wandering collection of styles in *THE OMEGA MAN* was neither entertaining nor enlightening, and one of the most complete insults in sci-fi history.

FRED F. SEARS [1966--EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS, 1967--THE GIANT CLAW]

Whether the effects are realistic (*SAUCERS*) or phony (*CLAW*), Sears remains thoroughly detached.

JACQUES TOURNEUR [1968--WAR GODS OF THE DEEP]

Just as KING KONG would have elevated Schoondaek, *WAR GODS* and *CURSE OF THE DEMON* would have justified Tourneur, but they're not science fiction. As it is, *WAR GODS* is a silly, unworthy project for the greatly talented Tourneur.

EDGAR G. ULMER [1951--MAN FROM PLANET X, 1960--AMAZING TRANSPARENT MAN, BEYOND THE TIME BARRIER]

Like Mario Sava, style is Ulmer's trademark. Yet Sava is as polished as Ulmer is an amateurish hack. He has made some good films, none of them sci-fi, although even the shoddy attempts at mood in *MAN FROM PLANET X* suggested that he had possibilities in science fiction somewhere but, alas, they never materialized.



ROGER VADIM [1969--BARBARELLA]

BARBARELLA failed as strongly to evoke a comic-book atmosphere just as Sava's *DIABOLIK* was as firmly successful. But Vadim used Jane Fonda's talents and charm quite nicely, tho it wasn't enough to glue this heavy mass of camp together.



And then there was one.

